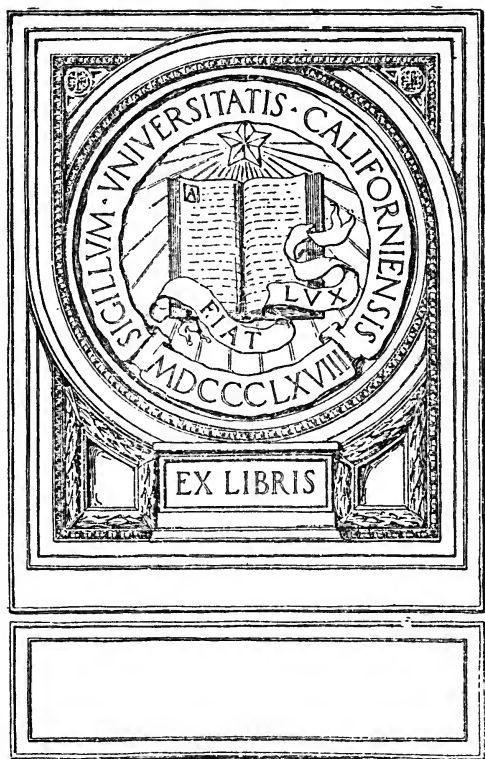
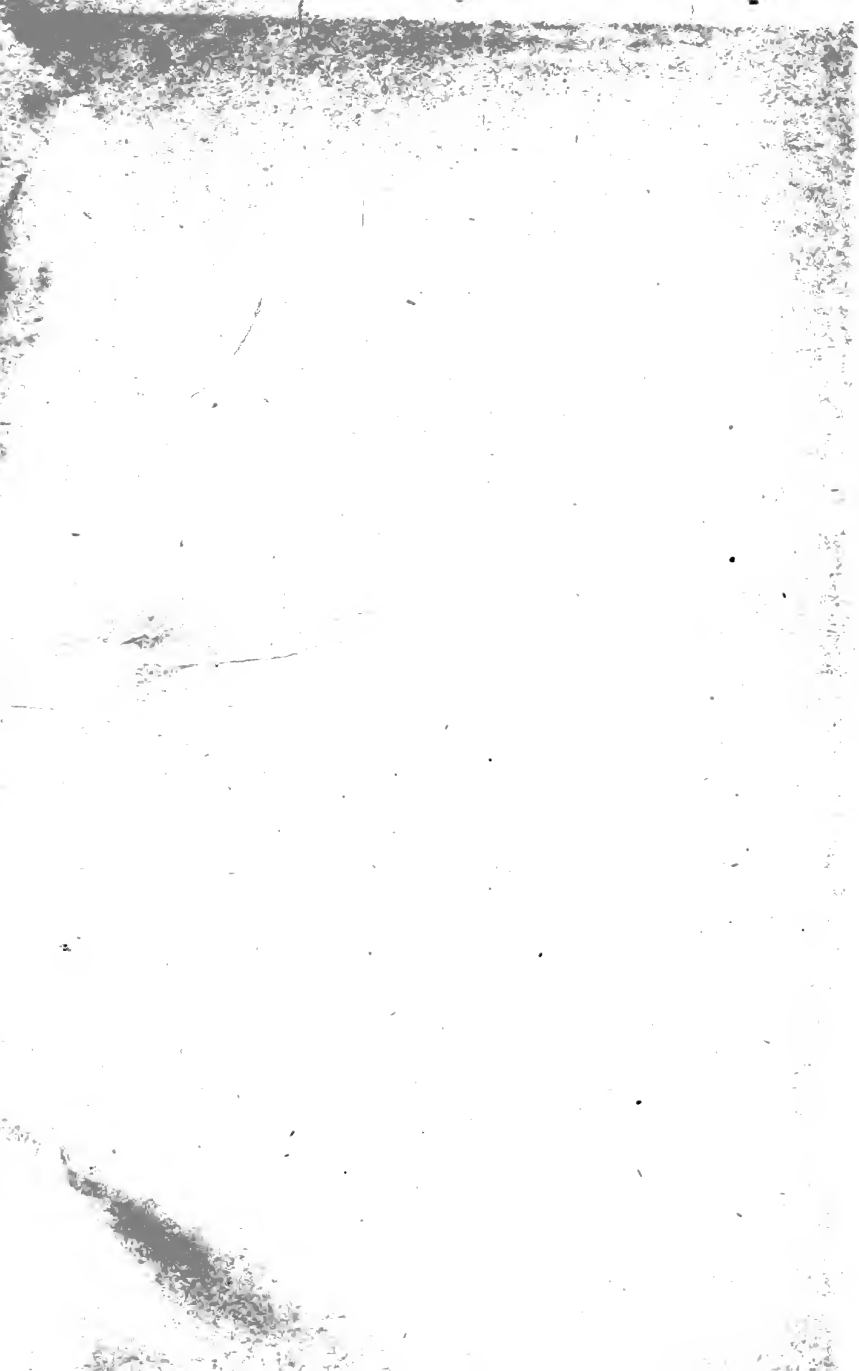


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AINSLIE GORE

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A SKETCH FROM LIFE

BY

MAJOR GAMBIER-PARRY

AUTHOR OF "ANNALS OF AN ETON HOUSE"
ETC. ETC.

"Tary no longer ; toward thyn heritage
Haste on thy way, and be of right good chere.
Go ech day onward on thy pilgrimage ;
Thynk how short time thou shalt abyde here."
Vox ultima crucis. JOHN LYDGATE, 1370-1447 (?).

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1914

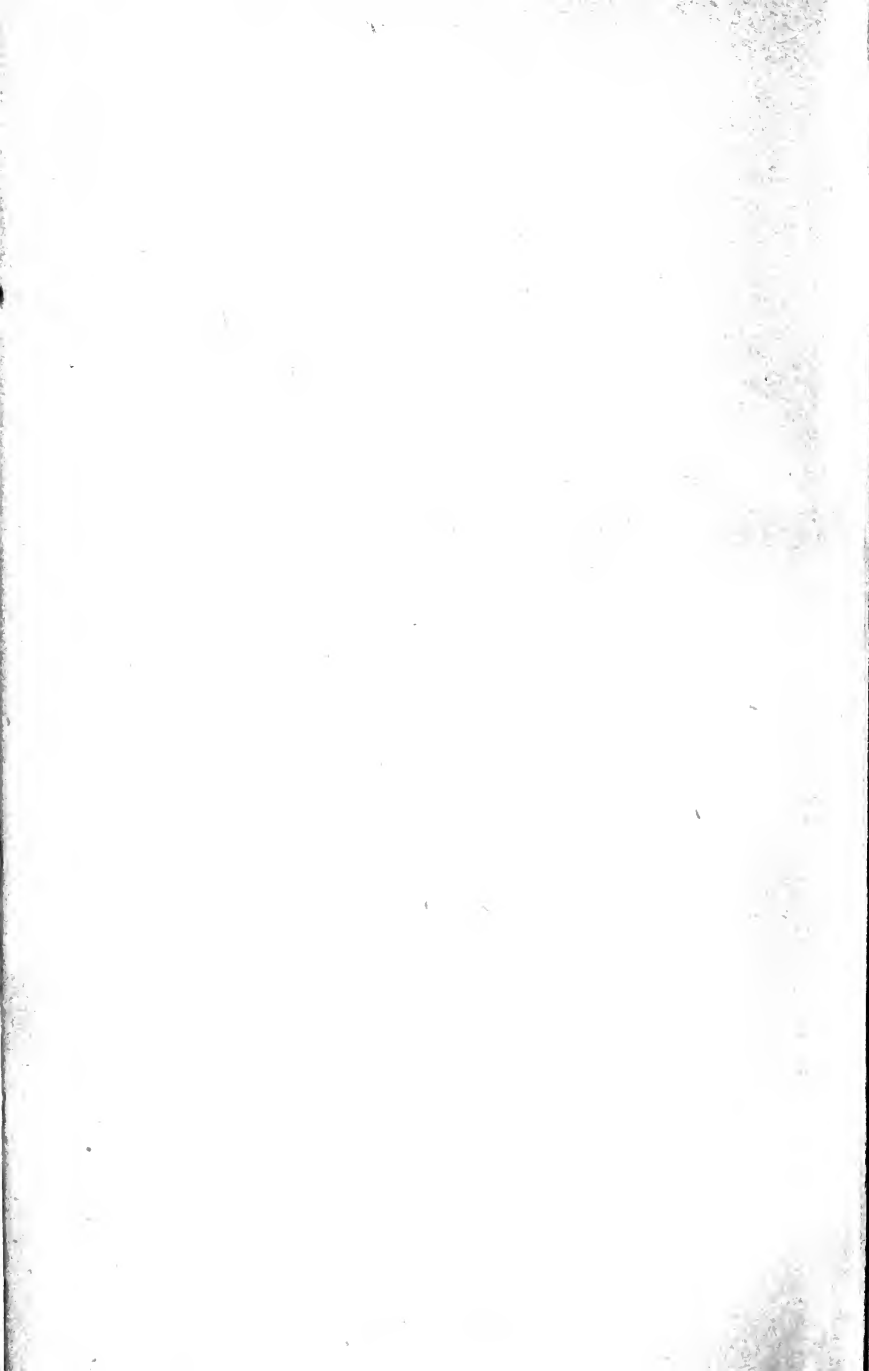
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TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE
ROYAL SOCIETY OF
EDINBURGH

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TO
THE PEOPLE OF
DENTON
WHO KNEW HIM AND LOVED HIM
I DEDICATE THESE PAGES



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AINSLIE GORE

A SKETCH FROM LIFE

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARIES

THIS is what lies upon the table at the moment—a bundle of letters, some scraps of paper with notes of conversations and other data in my own handwriting, and a common, penny account book with a green paper cover and mock white stitching in imitation of a ledger. This last has obviously never been put to the purpose for which it had been originally designed, but used as a diary, the various entries showing that they had been made in pencil during a few short weeks. The writing is a good deal rubbed; the corners and edges are stained and worn; and the book itself shows signs of having been much crumpled, as if carried for long in some one's pocket.

Up to last night these letters and papers had

been lying for years locked in a drawer, tied up with a narrow strip of buckskin that had once been pipe-clayed but had long since turned yellow. The whole collection amounted to very little, and there was something almost forlorn about its appearance. Yet it was all there was to go by—all from which a record might be compiled of a short life, and what had once been a close, personal intercourse.

Could anything be done? That is what I had asked myself before, and what I asked myself again now. Memory would come to my help and fill some gaps. These notes that I had made years ago might bring other matters back to mind. And then again, there were those still living who had witnessed the whole life and who would be able to recall much—tell me of what was said and what was thought; recount for me episodes to do with earlier days; and set me right where I was wrong. A few of the older friends of the family could certainly be relied upon; but the quarter where I felt I could get more what I wanted than elsewhere was among the villagers in his own home. They knew him and had in many a case loved him, and among the inhabitants of the place, therefore—from the tenant of the largest farm to the poorest labourer on the land—help would

be forthcoming, and in such ways I might be able to make up for the slenderness of these remains. It was worth an effort.

I had often cast a glance at the bundle, but, for many a year, had never undone the tie till last night. Why should I? I knew exactly what lay there, or thought I did—even to knowing some of the letters and the rest by heart. He was my friend—my one, great, intimate friend; and so it was that I had rarely even looked at the outside of the drawer without momentarily realising what lay there.

I knew that this packet of letters was safe where it was, and also that the small locked drawer of the piece of Chippendale, with its beautiful inlay and characteristic brass handles, standing in the corner of my room, held many precious things besides—that, in fact, that particular drawer was as my holy of holies—the contents a kind of epitome of a life—and therefore to be approached in a becoming spirit, and not when one was short of a job on a wet day. To fumble in it in that way would, to my mind, be tantamount to sacrilege. One must be quite alone when handling such things, and absolutely safe from interruption—at least, such was my feeling.

Thus it was only last night, late, when the

rest of the household had retired to bed, that, the spirit moving me, I took a candle, and sat down on a low rush chair and turned the lock. Then I realised in a moment that I was quite wrong. The scent of the drawer—that indefinable scent that all old drawers and their contents acquire as a matter of certainty in course of years—was familiar enough; but memory had played me false, and instead of knowing the many things that met my eye, I found I had quite forgotten some of them were there at all.

Here, for instance, was a string of black and gold Venetian beads, wrapped carefully in tissue paper. These, of course, had their story. Then, close to a long envelope containing three commissions signed by the greatest of all Queens, was an ordinary pill-box, and inside this a bullet, with a mark upon it as though it had struck something and smashed it. A date had been scratched in the lead on one side; and this is quite sufficient about that. Next to it was a number of regimental buttons strung on a leather bootlace and now much tarnished, and near them an envelope with this upon it, under a star in red chalk:—"A piece of our old Regimental Colour that was carried at the Alma, especially, and all through the Crimea, as well as the Indian Mutiny.

N.B. Over a thousand men are said to have fallen beneath the Colours of which this scrap is a part."

A single brass spur ; the mute of a violin ; a carefully folded piece of music paper, with a tune—an old, forgotten, Irish folk-song, scribbled down originally in pencil by this friend of mine as he listened to it sung on the rain-drenched slopes of Bochragh, and subsequently beautifully harmonised—came next, together with a small flat case, lined with crimson satin and containing three medals and clasps, with coloured ribbons.

These last, again, might pass ; but lying close by, was a dog's collar, with the name "Murphy" thereon, together with a cotton handkerchief with a blue border. Such things told much, and were accordingly folded away carefully again in a corner. A small cigar-box held a wonderful assortment of relics—a salmon fly ; an empty cartridge from a sporting rifle ; a leather watch chain with a rusty steel swivel ; a small silver flask bearing the names of two campaigns engraved on one side ; a photograph of a mother and a child in a battered, leather case ; and a prayer-book much stained by salt water. Each of course had its story, though such need not concern us here.

The bundle of letters and papers now in front of me was on quite a different plane. They had lain right at the back of the drawer, together with the battered, green, penny account book ; and beneath them was a copy of the New Testament in French, bound in red morocco, and with the name of a dead sister on the fly-leaf.

It had seemed to me, formerly, to be fitting that these should lie together, and it seems so still—the one with the name of a sister I had passionately loved in her own handwriting, and this packet—these meagre details of a close and intimate friendship—docketed by myself simply with his name—AINSLIE GORE.

The night was young when I removed the packet to the table, undid the tie, and began scanning one letter after another. With the exception of five that I knew lay together somewhere here, all were addressed to myself, and some dated back to the days of our boyhood. We had been neighbours in the country ; we were sent to our first school together ; had gone on to Eton together later ; and finally joined the same Regiment, and lived the full life that young soldiers do, seeing many things, doing many more, and dreaming many dreams ; the road of life lying broad and

open in front, in the blaze of the glad sun, with nothing apparently to check the swing of the march to the goal and the blue hills.

I only picked out a sentence or two in many of the letters, passing some over unopened, or with merely a glance at the date and the heading. Then came one or two that were scanned more closely before being returned to their envelopes, the hand unconsciously quickening as the next and then the next were referred to.

The wording of most of them was familiar enough; so also the subjects touched upon. Memory had at least not played one false here. The very hours of which many of these letters spoke returned vividly to mind as I read: I was back again in "the singing season," when the days rang from morn till eve with boyish laughter and each successive summer was a twelvemonth long—back, too, to the days when boyhood was left finally behind, when outlook began to grow more serious and ideas more definite.

The convictions and principles that had ruled this life had remained much the same throughout. Subjected from time to time to fresh influences they had necessarily been, the world being no place in which to walk about with a cut and dried formula in the pocket. New

impressions had necessarily come with the years, and new estimates had been quietly made, character being built up and strengthened by such means, and growing always, with him, to fairer proportions.

He was never one to accept what he met with on trust. Rather was his habit of mind to analyse everything, and thus when some new principle, or what struck him as being possibly essential, came within his range, he, so to speak, took it and flung it on the counter to see what ring it had, or whether it would ring at all. Once satisfied on such score, he was singularly tenacious of change; but it must be confessed that the standard to which he habitually subjected matters was a high one, and that the rules governing his actions—and even at times, as I thought, too rigidly—were no ordinary ones.

Such habits he had no doubt originally acquired in his home. His home was his standard, and I have certainly never met one in whom home influences remained so green, and throughout the term of life that was granted him. It was not so much in the direction of the things he had lisped in early childhood or had been told by his father and mother, but was more to be sought in the whole atmosphere

of his bringing up—the exceeding beauty of his surroundings, indoors and out ; the examples he had always before him ; the refining influences he was continually imbibing, and in his earlier days quite unconsciously.

To beauty in its countless forms he was ever peculiarly susceptible, especially beauty in nature. He lived an outdoor life, and thus grew up familiar with all things to do with the land, from where to look for the signs of the first awakening of spring, to what snipe and wild duck would be about when the seasons of the year had nearly run their course, when skies were dark with snow, and northerly winds blew keen. I often used to think that beauty in some form was a necessity to him. It was not only out of doors that he looked for it and took his fill ; it was the same at all times, no matter where he might be or what engaged upon. Thus, quite apart from the material things that met his eye, he sought for it, according to his mood at the moment and as if hungry and in need of food.

Now and again he would spend whole hours absorbed in the sonnets of Shakespeare, reading them till he had many a one by heart—among his favourite poems in Shelley, Keats, or Wordsworth, or in studying closely such

works as *The Ring and the Book*, and *In Memoriam*. He would get up after that, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walk out oblivious of anyone in the room at the time ; and on reaching outdoor air, would sometimes throw his head up, looking at the sky, as if he sought answer there to some question that puzzled him.

Of the poets he was never tired ; but I always thought that of the many influences that went to mould him, music was answerable for as much as any. For the piano he had a natural facility, being also gifted with an exceptionally beautiful touch. He always spoke of Beethoven with awe. He played Chopin well. He was fond of Schumann. Mendelssohn, so far as the piano was concerned, possessed few attractions for him, and he left him generally alone. At the same time he played light things and pretty things by later-day composers, realising that if others were to be interested and entertained, it was necessary for him to cultivate a certain catholicity of taste.

When alone by himself, and if anyone chanced to pass the library where the largest piano dwelt, they would hear him as often as not playing Bach ; the great Master always standing to him in the light of a king. I remember inter-

rupting him one day when so engaged and when I had waited long for him to join me in an expedition to our stream, the May fly being then on the water and trout rising freely. He would not be enticed away and did not stop, but went on steadily from the prelude he was studying to the end of the fugue. Then he jumped up, exclaiming—"Here! this is selfish!" his eyes quite dark in colour and his face full of light. His was a tall lissom figure, and he walked with slinging gait, and the next moment we were striding out together to see if we could land some of those fish.

"I don't know what it is about music," he said, his arm in mine, and his head bent slightly towards me—"or if you would understand me. At times I am afraid of it. It sets me on fire, and I feel as if I daren't go near it. I know, too, that it makes a fool of me now and then, and am jolly well ashamed of it. But sometimes, and when listening to something exactly in tune with the moment, I can tell you this—given the right tune, perhaps at the wrong time, I firmly believe that music could lead me to the devil."

Shortly after that he made several beautiful casts right under the hanging branches of some willows and against the wind, hooked the best

fish of the evening, and landed it, with a joyousness that might have made a stranger write him down as first and before all a sportsman, perhaps as a fisherman and nothing else.

Yet, in reality, there were as few limits to his pursuits as there were to his interests, though it is right to add that one among these last invariably stood out prominently from the rest. I have said that his home was the standard by which he judged most things ; it was also his passion, and for it no sacrifice could ever be too great. His love for it influenced his life, and to a large extent governed and controlled his actions as he grew up.

And if, in his sensitive way, he shrunk from logical conclusions, and thrust from him all thought to do with the future here, so far as it might concern himself, he knew that, humanly speaking, his beautiful home would one day be his ; that to him would fall the care of it, with all the responsibilities and obligations that ownership entailed ; and, what was of even greater importance in his eyes, the maintenance of the traditions of his race. Of these last he was rightly jealous, pride of family being very strong in him, and the honour of his class more precious than all possible possessions put together. He was well born, and showed this at all points ;

there was every prospect of his being fairly well off, and, knowing this, he was at all times open-handed to a fault. Possessed of such traditions, given to all manly exercises and outdoor pursuits, favoured as he was by birth, and graced with good looks and a winning manner, he stood always for what he was—as good an example as might be found of what an English gentleman might be.

Faults, of course, he had. He was somewhat quick tempered, impetuous, and given to be over critical ; and he certainly never suffered fools gladly. He would often fire up when things annoyed him, especially where he fancied the actions of others were wanting in charity or were unjust. And if such faults as these were in many instances the common failings of youth, there were signs later on in his short life of his getting the better of them.

Where wrong was done to himself he could forgive at once ; but he could not altogether forget at the same time, and in this he differed little from the remainder of mankind. With a temperament such as his, he could not fail to be somewhat sensitive. Possibly he liked to be liked, though he never showed the slightest trace of any craving for popularity, and indeed always condemned anything of the kind. He

never strove to put himself in the forefront, and he was always unduly modest—a failing more than a fault, and that in his case added a certain charm to his character.

Looking back now, it seems impossible to judge him by any ordinary standard. He was too many-sided. The calling he chose might have seemed to some likely to prove quite foreign to his disposition; yet he had from the first refused to hear of any other, finally throwing his whole heart into it and being marked by those who watched him as one certain to rise to the top. In the same way, his dreamy, Celtic temperament, tinged as it was by a certain melancholy and a besetting love of solitude—his love of music and his poetic tendencies—might have created a doubt about his being at heart a sportsman; yet besides a natural aptitude for games of all kinds—and he seemed to revel in the joys of them all alike—he was a first-class horseman and rider to hounds, and excelled as a shot; often mentioning, with a merry laugh, that he was duly “blooded” out cubbing in charge of the coachman, when seven years of age—and when he brought home a pad in his pocket to the subsequent annoyance of the household—and furthermore that he shot his first rabbit when nine.

There were many references to such things in these earlier letters, and also to those others outlined here ; but I found myself passing most of them by after a while, and looking for something else. I came upon what I wanted at last—five letters and the small book, tied together separately with a piece of crimson silk.

One was in a girlish hand and quite short and unimportant—a mere line of thanks for something that had been forgotten, and ending —“ I am commanded by father and mother (!) to ask you to come and shoot, over Slapton's, on Thursday, and to sleep the night ; and I am to say that *they* will be so pleased if you can manage it.”

Those referred to here were my own parents, and the writer of this apparently innocent letter was the sister just spoken of. Perhaps he had read into it something not visible to others. I think so, for he had prized the note sufficiently to take it to India with him a few days after it was written. The others lying with it, were one from his father and another from his mother, with two from myself. The whole came into my possession, with the small account book, in the course of my duties, and I was subsequently allowed to retain them all.

I only glanced at a few more after that : the

light of the lamp was growing dim, and my candles had nearly burnt themselves out. The last I opened ran to two sheets. It was mostly on a subject that always interested him, and ended thus: "My own feeling in regard to such a speculation as this, is that if the world were just, men would oftener pass for what they are. As it is, the world not for the most part being so, appearances and possessions, place and the purse, go frequently to form the verdict. You know what I have always said, and I hold by it. A man is great by what he is, not by what he does, much less by what he has. It seems to me, therefore, that we human beings, apart from the opinions of our fellows, ought always to strive to *be*, rather than to appear to strut the stage, saying, 'See what a fine figure I cut—look this way, please, all of you!' That's what that means. You know what Tennyson says in *Love thou thy Land*: I often repeat the lines to myself—

Nor toil for title, place, or touch
Of pension, neither count on praise:
It grows to guerdon after-days:
Nor deal in watch-words over much.

That's about it, I think. Be yourself, and let the rest slide. But I am getting prosy: it is late, and I must stop. Good-bye. A.G."

The last words brought the fact home to myself. It was late ; or rather, dawn was at hand and another day would be shortly breaking. The letters had all been numbered, when they were first put into the drawer years ago, and they were all in their proper sequence now. The few remaining papers I scarcely looked at ; but tied the whole up again, and then sat down with them in front of me, to lose myself for half an hour in thought.

I had not expected, when I opened the drawer some hours before, that the old memories would return with such vividness. I thought I knew, and all too well, the salient points in the story of this life, and so I did. But scanning these letters rapidly, one after the other, had made me realise that earlier impressions had in reality become dim by lapse of time : the past stood out once more before me with almost painful clearness : the familiar, loose-knit figure—the striking, thoughtful face—even the sound of the voice, seemed to return, as though this one intimate friend were again close to me in this room of mine.

I went to the nearest window, drew up the blind and threw up the sash. In the intense stillness that reigns so often in the hour when dawn silently makes way for daybreak, the

whole picture came back to mind, and the old questions that had battled for answer surged up anew to meet the same relentless silence as before. Sorrow had passed away: time's good hand had seen to that. One no longer mourned, though memories were green as ever. Some day the reason would appear, and as certainly as the light of the sun that would presently shoot up above the blue hills and the dark majestic forms of the great trees, and sweep all shadows from the sky. There could be no doubt whatever about that, and I remembered well his firm convictions on such points.

Meanwhile, what of this short life, these letters, these papers, and the rest? Did no message lie here? No life ever born into the world is without its office, and no one dies to himself. One of the most appalling facts of existence is, on the contrary, that our acts and their results run on and live; the great consolation being that they are not, perhaps, all bad, and that good in some form, and more often than some think, comes out of ill.

There were riddles here in plenty, as elsewhere, and I remembered his saying to me once—"Nothing from which humanity suffers is without Divine significance. I know it to

be desperately hard to understand ; but somehow or other I feel it to be true. Don't you see, my dear fellow, that otherwise life would often be a tragedy in one act and nothing more, there being an end to us all at the fall of the curtain. There can't be a God in heaven and *that* ! It would mean waste ; and I have never been able to find indisputable evidence of waste anywhere.

"Of course we ask questions," he went on—"we are meant to. Progress is impossible without inquiry ; and life means progress, mind you—the very antithesis of death. Of course it may be little use to expect answer always ; but that doesn't mean that we are not to go on asking and making inquiries to the utmost possible length. Depend upon it, we shall get an answer of some sort, either individually or collectively, and humanity will have progressed another width of a hair.

"What I hate most is the chap who chucks and won't go on—just jacks up, you know, and swears all the conditions on this side the line are hopeless. That must be wrong, mustn't it—and principally for the reason that life is no funeral procession ; life leads to life, not death !"

I seemed to hear the words again quite

distinctly. Perhaps I was overwrought after the night hours and all that the reopening of these letters and the rest had meant to me. "Life leads to life, not death," I kept repeating to myself; finally exclaiming, as if in acquiescence—"Yes, that's quite true!"

A white light was showing in the sky over the Cotswolds, and at the same moment the rooks began to talk to one another in the neighbouring elms. It was the middle of May, and the young birds were no longer roosting in the nests. The sun would rise in another ten minutes. The airs of daybreak were beginning to move, bearing with them the scents of the dawn. It was nearly four o'clock.

The papers were carefully returned to the drawer after that; and as I crossed the hall, the glass in the upper part of the great oriel window there glowed like a thousand jewels, for the rim of the sun showed over the hills.

"Yes," I said to myself—"I will try, even though I fail in my drawing to give any beauty of line."

CHAPTER II

HIS HOME, FORBEARS, AND BOYHOOD

DENTON MANOR, the family home, where Ainslie Gore was born on the 25th of October 1872, stands on the slopes of the Cotswold Hills, facing west and commanding a wide view of the Severn vale—undulating lands, great woods, and broad fields, bordered for the most part by magnificently timbered hedgerows, lying spread out below like a map of many colours. Nor is this all. On the farther side of the great river itself, the line of Dene Forest is often clearly visible from the front of the house, with the Welsh mountains now and again beyond that, especially when the warm rains that sweep up Bristol Channel have washed the air crystal clear in spring-time.

On such days, it is even possible to count the trees in the clump on the summit of May Hill, set there originally, men say, as serviceable landmarks for bargemen whose lot it was,

and is, to navigate the wide Severn estuary. There are shallow, fixed sands there, like the Great Noose just below Newnham, and many miles, too, of dangerous shifting banks, spread east of this and stretching from off Frampton to Purton Passage farther south—ay, and always with the treacherous tides about them, to make matters still more hazardous; these last racing on always, with their voices not those of the sea though they come with the cry of all the gulls—racing on still, with the solemn herons above them, to start the roaring bore on its impetuous journey far inland.

You can see these sands plainly from Denton, though some way off, and watch the tides slowly covering and laying them bare again—in the glint of the summer sun, or in the moonlight of frosty, winter nights. The Manor House stands high, in a park of some three hundred acres, and is to be seen itself from all the country round. Immediately about it are gardens of great beauty, with fine oak and elm timber on every hand, and with cedars nigh two centuries in age to give shade upon its level lawns. The date of the house, which is of old red brick, is late Elizabethan; and this is confirmed, not only by its obvious character,

but also by this inscription, now almost obliterated, over its entrance door—

Bless this house ere y^e be gone,
And God will bless y^e passing on.
1599. GRG.

The initials are those of the Gore who established his family here in the first instance, and whose body rests in front of the altar in the village church, the ivy-clad tower of which is visible from the windows, standing amidst tall elms and a few scattered cottages with stone walls and stone-tiled roofs, grey in colour and beautiful to look upon.

The full name of this member of the family was Giles Roger Gore. He lived to be old, his age being given on his tomb as 72, and the date of his death as 1651. He must have seen and heard of strange doings in his lifetime, being already nine years of age when the Spanish Armada was swept from the seas, and surviving Charles I by two years. And if there are few records of him in the old Manor House that he certainly built beyond a fine portrait by Van Dyck, this at least is established—that he fought for the King in the great Civil War. He is known without doubt to have been at Lansdown and Roundway Down,

when Waller was defeated ; to have witnessed the fall of Bristol ; to have seen the King master over all the south-west country saving Plymouth. He was with the King when he stopped to lay siege to Gloucester and fortune began from that hour to desert the Royal cause. He saw the siege raised, and was crippled for life by wounds received just afterwards at Newbury.

There is also told of him this, that is significant of the spirit of the man. He took his eldest son with him to the war, though then but seventeen years of age ; and when the youth was discovered stark and stiff upon the field, where he himself lay sorely wounded, he is said to have exclaimed to those who came to tell him of his loss—" Had I ten instead of two, and God so willed, they should e'en die for his Majesty as this our gallant Amos hath ! "

The Gores of those days were staunch, loyal folk, recking nothing, so long as they might do what seemed to them to be their duty ; caring little for hard knocks, and ready to deal them in return with interest where the Country's welfare was at stake. Such were evidently common characteristics among these men, and continued so to be among their descendants right on through the centuries.

Thus some went out into the world in search of adventure, or obeyed the call to arms, while others remained on their estates at Denton, experiencing all the ups and downs that marked the eighteenth century for those on the land, whether owners, farmers, or labourers. Many documents, still extant among the family papers, show these things plainly, and especially, too, how money was lavished in improving the property, and the active personal interest that was taken in farming when it came to be the reigning taste of the day. The head of the family for the time being seems generally to have regarded his home as his first care, and to have trained his sons to so regard it when their turn came—that is, when these sons did not chance to be fighting for their Country far afield. The family papers leave no room for doubt on that score.

And so it comes about that there are ample records here—old stained and faded letters, together with contemporary diaries, later jottings and the rest—detailing how this and that one took part in the French and American wars of 1775–83, and how others fought and bled and gave their lives, right through the long years 1793–1815, when all Europe was in arms

and the figure of Napoleon overshadowed the world.

It seems to have been a point of honour with them to go where blows were being struck. Their Country was, to them, their Country. They were content to till its soil, to live always in the home, to work for the common weal; but if a call came for them from other fields, they realised the larger claim and went out sword in hand to strike a blow for the Country's sake; and, though they did not grasp this fully in the earlier days, to add a brick to the building of an Empire over Seas. There were wild ones among them of course, and certainly one who brought the family to the verge of ruin; but the wildness of this one's life set a limit to his days, and by much subsequent self-denial and strenuous work on the part of his successors, Denton was put upon its feet again.

The Gores, then, were plain English squires, fit representatives of a class that was for long regarded as England's backbone; men who lived among their people and knew them, being loved by them in turn; whose aim was peace and happiness in life, but whose sons were always at the call of their Country, either on sea or land, to the uttermost ends of the world. Tradition was very strong among these men,

and had been handed down through generations; and those who lived around them, whether in cottage or farmhouse, were no less jealous that such traditions should be preserved. These last liked to see those on whose land they lived, occupying the shoes of their forbears in what they judged to be a fitting manner—with open-handedness and hospitality, living and letting live, just to all men alike, doing their duty as English gentlemen, without fear, and with honour always first.

A marked personal pride belonged to many of these people of the land. They equally had their traditions, and such were bound up in many an instance with those of “the family,” as they usually designated their neighbours living up at the big house. Few things they enjoyed more than being able to show their knowledge in such connection, and for a visitor to make a mistake was almost certainly to be corrected in some such way as this: “No, zir; beggin’ your pardon. ’Twer’ hisn’s gran’fayther as builded they Almshouses. Mine did used to work for un, so mi old fayther ’ould tell; an’ he did often say as he see’d un, times, when er was a-layin’ of it out. Hisn’s son wer’ this here Mr. John, an’ it wus he as did found the loaf and blanket charity. Ah!—the times me an’

mi old missus 'a blessed he 'ould take some reckonin', I judges; an' that's truth."

Such folk as these knew the family's genealogy to a nicety, and if not personally cognisant of facts to do with earlier days, would add the inevitable, "so I've hear'd tell" in broadest Gloucestershire. And wonderful, too, were the stories they could recount about various members of the same—their feats of strength and horsemanship especially. They liked to see a bit of dare-devil in that class; admired pluck and fearlessness; and "didn't hold wi' 'oomanness in men at all, at all." Thus they would relate, with many a grin, how "this un went out to the wars an' never come 'ome," or how "that un for a wager did take un's horse over the upright park palin's, that un did"; how "ourn bells was rung for this un's wedding," or "Tom wer' tolled two hours long, when that un wer' took back." Such items were, to their minds, nothing less than the most important part of the history of the place, and fit to be preserved accordingly.

Of all the stories, however, there was one that went the rounds continually, and does so still, though in somewhat altered fashion. It had to do with the first of the Gores, and ran in this way, in Willum, the cobbler's word-

ing: "You must know as un had a famous horse, an' as the Lysett o' that day, whose property did run wi' hisn's, and do so yet—wull, he had jus' such another. An' nothin' 'ouldn't suit 'em but er must wager one agin another for a hunderd pound, an' as to which on 'em 'ould zwim furthest out in Severn when tide was high. So down 'em goes to banks wer' it be two mile across—yonder, by Kingston Pill, abooove the Royal Drift—an' sets to a-zwimming for arl as 'em was worth. 'Twas but a risky job, as it most ways be wher' Severn do have his say. An' it wer' Roger's horse as won, he did, for t'other did zwim an' zwim till un was drowned.

"But when Roger—as I makes so bold as to call un—wull, when Roger did come ashore wi' hisn's—an' blow'd proper, they tells as he wus, both man an' horse—he says, when he looks at un—'Never another day's work shall ye do. Ye shall be turned out for the rest o' yer days in the leer¹ paddock, ye shall, and yer shoes shall hang on church door,' he says. An' if yer misdoubts what I do tell ye, step over to church yonder, an' look inside porch wi' yer own eyen; an' ther' behind

¹ Empty or vacant: a good example of a Saxon word still in use in the county.

a bit o' wire nettin' an' set in iron frame, like, be half one o' hisn's shoes and the whole of another: both of 'em be fore shoes, what be lef'. That's they, right eno'—yas—yas—an' what I been a-tellin' on yer be just Bible's truth: an' he hitched 'em ther' hisself, he did—on thic ther' door, as everyun do know."

The doings of the family in the big house remained, in this way, subjects of perennial interest among those who lived and worked on the estate, whether such belong to tradition, fell within living memory, or were matters of to-day. Between them, in the course of generations, had sprung up a personal relationship that made for happiness, that scouted strangers talking with glib tongues, and resented outside interference.

These people of the land, as always, were very critical; but here, as elsewhere throughout the Country, the verdict they passed was based on knowledge gathered at first hand, whether among this class or that—farmer or working hand, vicar or schoolmaster, the keeper of the village shop or the landlord of the village inn, the blacksmith that shod the Squire's horses or the bargemen that landed him his coal from the other side of Severn. Each one brought his quota of the things he knew.

Those they criticised among themselves were always before them in one way and another : they lived their lives hard by one another ; they passed each other continually in the lanes and the fields, going about their daily duties ; and between them there was always therefore something of a common outlook.

Then again, at Denton, as in countless other places, there was continuity. The farms had passed from father to son for generations, being reckoned as good as freeholds by those who tilled them ; the cottagers called their houses their homes, and were always ready to tell you, moreover, that "they and their'n had lived ther' year on year, they had." The very names of these people were a distinct part of the parish, and to look through the registers, right back to the seventeenth century, was to meet with Tratmans and Gydes, Rutters and Alliffs, Webbs and Parsloes and the rest—the names being often spelt in all kinds of strange ways, even where brothers were concerned—and always, whether in case of births or marriages or deaths, with those others scattered over the pages—the names of these Gores of many generations.

All classes, then, were continually together here in the affairs of every day ; and there

was unity and much of happiness. The rejoicings at a birth, the feasting at a wedding, the mourning at the close of a life, were shared, in great measure, by all these folk alike, though tradition has it, further, that few things moved this village community more at any time than the birth of a son and heir to the estates.

Certainly, when Ainslie was born, this last was more than ever the case. Denton had long stood without a direct heir, and Rupert Gore and his wife—Edith, daughter of Sir Alwyn Ward in the same county—were approaching middle age when he appeared. The Squire himself had seen something of active service in the Crimea, and on hearing that a son and heir was his, exclaimed in his jovial manner—“And on Balaclava day, too! That’s just first-rate, and will mark the boy himself for a certainty.” After which he relapsed for a while into reminiscences to do with events of long ago, and then went off in some haste to find the leader of the bell-ringers, that the peal in the belfry down at the church might carry the news all over the parish.

It was a still, golden, autumn day without a breath of wind stirring, so the sound of the merry peal was heard afar, and that night the

subject was the talk in nearly every house in the place. Of course there were the time-honoured feastings, according to custom ; the cider horn being passed round freely, and there being much rejoicing. But the feeling went a good deal farther than this with the majority at Denton, and as the boy grew up, and came to be referred to as—"That be Mr. Ainslie, our young Squire"—there were some, and more especially the head keeper, Giles Merrett, the old coachman, William Welfare, and such like, who fancied that, out of doors at least, they were entitled to have a hand in his bringing up, just as there were others "who kep' an eye on him, unbeknownst" lest harm befell him.

Among the farmers and the majority of the cottagers, it was much the same. The one who would some day be their Squire was regarded here as almost common property ; and while he rode his pony with the Berkeley hounds till it was blown, or appeared round the corner of a covert stalking rabbits on a summer evening, there were many who considered his credit as bound up with their own, and took note of him as he grew up with an ever-increasing interest.

And while the inhabitants of the place and

the more prominent among the dependents up at the house, talked and acted in these ways, the boy, Ainslie, himself grew up in an atmosphere that was fitted above all others to qualify him for his position in life. He knew every yard of the estate before he had been long in his teens, and had come by this knowledge, and much else, out hunting. He had picked up something about the crops in the fields—how and when they were sown, grew up, and were harvested—and had learnt this when shooting over the manor. He had come to know the points to look for in sheep and stock, just as he had in the case of a horse, having gathered these things in chats with stockmen or from the kindly words of the farmers. He had learnt at the same time the elements of woodcraft—how trees were planted, oaks stripped, the numerous uses to which ash poles could be put, the value of larch in and out of ground, how ash stood in comparison with oak—the head woodman who had served the family from boyhood delighting to answer his questions when he came upon the men in the depths of the woods in the winter season.

All these things, and many a score of others, he was gathering always, consciously or unconsciously, as he roamed about in his holidays as

a boy ; just as, when he came to be a little older, he learnt something of the outlook of those who lived their lives here, who worked here and had worked here always—their idiosyncrasies, their characters that were so difficult to comprehend, the hardships that were an inseparable part of their existence, their daily round of toil in all weathers, the narrow margin that lay at all times between such labouring folk and want.

Then again, while all here did not regard him from the same point of view—such being an impossibility anywhere—he learnt to give and take, to understand that all could not think alike,—that because such an one was an awkward customer, or an idler worth no wage at all ; because this one had become soured by misfortune, or that one had strange ideas in his head—there was no reason for him to give them the cold shoulder. There were men of all sorts here, as elsewhere, and women too ; and with many there was another side to the one they often showed, and which seemed to declare that to understand it all a lifetime would be required, if even the rudiments of this lesson could be learnt in that.

There was only one way in which it could be attempted, and this was by walking the

land, mixing with the fathers and the mothers, and growing up with the children of the same. Only by such means could the necessary knowledge be imbibed, by which acts might be governed in the future that lay ahead ; only by acquiring these things, here and now, could just opinions be formed in later years, as if by instinct, when difficulties arose.

There were secrets here that money could never buy, and that were so subtle in their character that even those who held the key to them rarely realised their value when they brought them out for use. They were a part of the life, as the air was the life of the fields. These things, hidden away in tradition, could not be defined or analysed ; but behind them for prize, to those who had studied and had come to know, there lay ahead again this—the confidence, the trust, even, it may be, the love, that the people of the land know how to give, and always in a way that is their own.

And if I, who write, know well that in the case of Ainslie Gore the conditions of his upbringing were just these from the very first, it is also impossible to omit a reference to those other influences that were always at work in his home. He was destined to be an only child, and therefore to miss much, no less than to be

open to much more. But he was blessed with wise parents, and of these it is necessary to say a word.

His mother was of saintly character, but wholly free from those weaknesses that are sometimes found in such. Her religion was the chief fact in regard to her, and to be even a short time in her company was to feel this without doubt at all. Yet it was never in the forefront. You could see something of it in her beautiful face ; it was reflected in her actions and her daily life ; it came out in quiet moments ; and the poor, to whose homes she went in their hours of trouble, knew it well, and grew in many a case to lean on her.

At the same time she was never anything but her natural self. She loved life for its opportunities : she was wise : she could enter into the interests of all about her : she had the keenest sense of fun ; she loved to see manliness in men, to hear of their doings, their work, their sports, their games ; but there ever shone out in her the characteristics that mark womanliness at its purest and best, and thus her influence was very wide. I knew her well, from boyhood onwards, and I never failed to realise that there was no one, outside my own home, to whom I could go for opinion and

advice with greater certainty of help than to her. She would listen, ask a few questions in a gentle, affectionate way, and then tell you what she felt. Her advice was not always palatable; but in the end there was never any doubt about the wisdom of her conclusions. Behind her natural gentleness there was strength, and if you felt sometimes, in youthful days, that her reproof was hard—the more so, perhaps, as it came from her—it somehow spurred you to get back into her good graces, to see that smile on her face again, and to realise anew as you grew older that here was one who carried into her daily, busy life the reflection of the principles to which she clung—who showed what capacity for loving might really mean in woman, and that made of Denton the home and the place that it was.

The people of the parish naturally loved her deeply. She was their friend; not as the lady bountiful—there was nothing whatever of that about her, though there was no limit to her generosity. She understood them, and each one knew that they could come to her on all occasions and that she, of a certainty, would understand.

An old inhabitant described her once to me exactly: it was Susan Mantel, who kept a little

sweet-shop, and also sold string and tallow candles. She knew the talk of the place to a nicety, and gathered many things, standing behind her tiny counter, in her black, frilled cap, red shawl, and blue cotton apron.

"Ah," she said, "ther' be our Squire's good lady, now: she don't never pry. She do come in, an' sets down, an' just be one o' our sel', like, and no odds what caddle anyun be in. And I reckons as I seen it, like a-this—and times, when trouble been a-gate—the room wer' lit, like, when she come in, and darker a sight when she been gone!"

Rupert Gore, on the other hand, was typical of what a Squire might be. The eldest of three sons, he had succeeded his father at Denton when thirty-six years of age, and when he shortly afterwards married. By way of keeping touch with something of soldiering he joined the County yeomanry, taking with him to the ranks some half-dozen of his tenants or their sons. He was fond of horses, and was known as one of the best men to hounds in the Berkeley field. Love of sport was born in him. He was a first-class shot, and in his younger days was never happier than when out by himself on his wide, exposed lands along the banks of the great tidal river—waiting, perhaps, knee-deep

in flood water, for a flight of duck at cockshut ; following up the reens and tramping the marshy grounds for a chance at a snipe, or listening for the drumming of their wings ; trying to get the better of a flock of green plover, or watching for the coming of the wild geese at the close of September.

It was a flat, lonely country down there, with something almost weird about it—where cattle, and now and then great flocks of sheep, gained subsistence, and across which fierce, angry winds swept in winter-time, coming up with the whole drift of the Bristol Channel behind them and laden heavily with snow. No weather was ever known to stop Rupert Gore : he was hard as a chip of oak, caring nothing for exposure, but rather revelling in it, and telling many stories of what he had heard and seen and felt, down there on those wind-swept grass grounds when most men were glad to be in shelter.

Yet while he was all this, Rupert Gore was something far more. It was said of him afterwards that he never neglected a duty. On county business he was here, there, and everywhere, passing from this matter to that, till some would say that he seemed almost to have the faculty of being in two places at once. He

was by nature a hard worker, and he was an early riser. When even the smallest detail called for attention on his estate, he went and inquired, and saw for himself, either alone or in company with the agent or the steward. Then he formed his own opinion without hesitation, and acted on it.

No doubt he made mistakes at times ; but his tenants always said that he “erred with honesty, and that there was no more doubt of his acting justly and honourably than there could ever be of his open-handedness.” They one and all believed in him ; they liked him ; they knew that “he knew a thing or two” ; and they were content, therefore, to leave the settlement of any difficulty or trifling dispute to him. They welcomed him on their farms, with that smile they knew well on his round, good-humoured face—ready for a chat or a stroll across the fields with them ; taking as much interest in their crops as if they were his own, feeling a stroke of ill-luck no less keenly than themselves, and bearing their losses always in his mind.

Then, too, they liked to see him out in the wind and the weather—far off, perhaps, against the sky-line—passing time of day with the men at plough, or on his way to pay the

shepherd a visit, when the snow was on the ground and the man was often working night and day in lambing time. Such men, for their part, welcomed him no less heartily than their employers, knowing well enough that when times were hard he seldom went about empty-handed. The very dogs greeted him in the folds, just as the cottage women knew the wave of his hand as he went by and the sound of his cheery voice. The children racing out of school one and all smiled at him. He could address nearly all of them by name, and was in the habit of stopping and having a word or two with them when he met them in the lanes. This hard-bitten-looking man loved a child, so much so that it was commonly believed he would have given his life for one at any time; and of course by that freemasonry that is a part of child nature, and also of some dumb animals, these children were no less aware of it unconsciously themselves, losing their shyness when in his company.

"It be a sight o' pity as he haven't got a dozen of his own in place of one," remarked Lawrence Allen to me on one occasion: he held the Compass furlong, a small farm on which he was always ready to show you where a hare lay—"a sight o' pity, it be. But there,"

he added, his big, red face expanding into an even broader smile than usual—"but there, I'll tell ye what. There be folks as says as it do take a lifetime to make a farmer. I knows as it doesn't! No lifetime'll do it. Bless the life on yer, it have got to be bred in him afore he starts. And if that be so, how long be it a-goin' to take to make a Squire? Can yer tell me that? O' course yer can't. Ther' he goes, over yonder, see, in his breeches and gaiters and his spud stick. An' there be folk as thinks as they can buy *that*! They bain't so far out, may be, wi' the breechin'; but all the gold on earth'll never find t'other, or replace un when er's gone!" And he turned from the gate on which he had been leaning, without another word.

The origin of my being so much at Denton and Ainslie with me in my home, especially in our early boyhood, may, I think, be undoubtedly traced to the mutual wish of our elders. Our homes were but three miles apart, the two properties marching together for a considerable distance. We were born in the same year, and as I was brotherless and possessed an only sister somewhat younger than

myself, no doubt the parents on both sides—very old friends as they were—considered it advisable that their two boys should play and get about together.

And there was certainly no mistake, as time went on, about the play and the getting about. The ideas governing the actions of our respective parents appear to have been that, within reason, we were to be allowed as much latitude as possible, and by this means learn how to stand on our own feet and to walk on our own toes. They may have also had it in their minds that a special Providence habitually waits on all boyish escapades, enabling them to grow up, in spite of themselves, fairly complete in the matter of limbs and with both eyes. It is certainly well that they held such beliefs in our case.

Looking back now, I feel that we must have stretched the patience of that good Providence to its utmost, as we certainly did that of those excellent souls who were set over us, and often, it must be owned, to breaking-point. We lived a life of adventure, more especially in the holidays after our first entry at a private school. Whether Ainslie was staying with me, or I with him, there were ponies to ride and fish to be caught, guns to become acquainted with, and

games of all sorts to be played. And while, apparently, we were allowed to do just as we liked, and there were those always ready to teach us the rudiments of these various accomplishments, from gamekeepers and coachmen, to butlers and those patient footmen who were had out to bowl to us in a blazing July sun, it is only quite in later years that I have become convinced that there was method in it all—that these good people at our elbows must have all the while been receiving implicit directions as to the course they were to follow under certain circumstances.

Otherwise, it does not at once become apparent why it was that when we had made our way to old Giles Merrett's house in the woods and asked for our guns, that he was on those occasions generally not to be found by his wife; or if we caught him, that he had, by some unaccountable mischance, lost the key of the gun cupboard. In the search that followed, whether for Giles himself or for the key, we joined with ardour. But for some reason not at all strange then, that search proved generally quite fruitless, and we had to return from whence we came unarmed. Now I come to think of it, there were many episodes of the kind, though they were always quite

natural to us then, if they were also attended with a passing disappointment that left us for the time a little glum.

But even with the best will in the world, there was no safeguarding us at all points. It would be difficult to say which was the ringleader; but I am inclined to think that Ainslie was, though at times the blame was certainly visited on me. There was no limit to our energy; all days were long, though none too long for all we wished to do. The land all round, and for a considerable distance, belonged to our respective parents, and those living on either property were almost to a man our friends.

And here again it was very remarkable how these friends came on the scene at moments when we were walking into jeopardy. I cannot conceive how this could have been otherwise than planned, and by the same heads and hands as in the case of the guns, the ponies, and the rest. As we became a little older and reached twelve and thirteen, we naturally began to kick against outside interference and in ways that sometimes led to words with our good friends aforesaid.

We had, I suppose, begun to feel our strength in more directions than one. We had lived

an outdoor life and picked up many things, fancying we knew a lot; we were growing fast and our muscles were beginning to harden; and in Ainslie's case, Mrs. Jinks, the Denton housekeeper—the personification of good-nature, with whom we often wrestled—was not far wrong when she averred that he was “just a little Arab, and muscle all over, so that there was no holding of him.” He was strong in all ways, and muscularly so especially. There were few trees he could not climb: he could jump a sheep hurdle easily, and, later on, clear many of the gates upon the place: he could run down village boys older than himself when he judged they were where they had no right to be, and tackle them; and all games came to him easily.

Then again, while such things added to his popularity, he was of singularly attractive appearance and manner, even as a small boy; and Susan Mantel of the little shop would often remark—“Ah; ther' be our young Squire, now. Look at un. Sunny, bain't he? Why, hisn's face be his fortune; anyun can see a-that—anyun!”

I think old Susan was right. Lissom, active, full of life and “go,” built as straight as a line, with fair hair and laughing grey eyes, and

declaring his breeding at all points, he was a boy that would take anyone's fancy in a moment, and win his way to their hearts no less quickly.

It would, perhaps, be idle here to deal at any length with our boyish doings and hair-breadth escapes ; but one or two at least must be referred to, for they illustrate Ainslie's character. Water has always an attraction for boys, and it had long been our desire to get afloat on that innocent-looking Severn estuary—here some two miles in breadth, and with all those sands far out as further attractions. The river had never been placed out of bounds—if indeed we recognised the term at all—and possibly because there were no boats down there of any kind, or so much even as a Severn punt with cocked-up stern and bows. Then, too, when the tide was out, a wide expanse of mud fringed the shore, and there was at those hours no getting to the water.

We had often asked John Gratian, the landlord of the Gore Arms, who, in his own ketch, the *Mayflower*, had navigated these very waters for years and knew more about them therefore than any other man in Denton parish—we had often asked him about his past experiences, and had stood open-mouthed when he recounted

for our benefit his wonderful escapes from being cast away on those treacherous Severn banks. We had even asked him once concerning the possibility of our going afloat ourselves, if boat could be found, when he answered us without more ado in this fashion—

“Now look ye here; minds as you boys never thinks of doin’ the likes. And minds—for you to do that and for me to get wind on it, be for me to go straight up to Squire and tell un as the best thing as he can do, if it be his meanin’ to let the likes of boys o’ your age to go meddlin’ wi’ Severn, be for him to step down to parson and tell un to offer prayers for the two of you in church when Sunday comes, for nothin’ else ’ll save ye!”

On that occasion we were certainly impressed; and no doubt John meant us so to be. But chancing, some ten days later, to be down along the river banks, I remember we were as much startled to find a solitary boat lying there, as Crusoe must have been when he first detected the footsteps of the man Friday in the sands. The effect on us both was the same: we had never seen boat there before, and the sudden appearance of this craft filled us with a kind of fear. She was just a large-sized dinghy, recently tarred, had a white streak

below the gunwale, and was fixed to the shore by a chain painter and a long rope.

It was the time of spring tides and a bright and sunny day. Green ripples kissed the boat's sides; there was not more than four inches of water beneath the keel at the stern; and she was only just aground at the bows. Of course we were not long before we were inside that boat. We had approached with caution, doubting if anyone was on board, and finding no one, shortly began meddling with matters we had better have left alone. First, we separated the painter from the rope; then we got her more afloat; and after that the tide took charge.

I can remember now with what rapidity the shores appeared to recede from us, and also the exclamations that escaped us when we found that the pair of oars the boat contained were securely padlocked to the after thwart. Ainslie was quite calm and began whistling a favourite tune, posing rather as captain of the craft, and expressing the opinion that very likely the current that had taken us out would work in a circle and take us back again. But the flat shore receded farther and farther from us, and it shortly became evident that we were outward bound.

On realising this, the first thing that Ainslie ordered was for one of the bottom boards to be lifted. With this we tried to paddle, and at least to keep the boat's head pointing one way. Needless to say our efforts were quite fruitless, and we followed such course as the tide permitted, broadside on. As the stream took us farther, our pace naturally increased; but now and again as we sped on we noticed that the water gradually grew deeper, though we knew enough to realise that the short ripple farther out meant shallows, and that these, the variable sands off Frampton Pill, were so-called quick-sands.

I do not think our situation troubled us in the least. Ainslie, for his part, appeared to be thoroughly enjoying it, and kept singing to himself as he looked down over the gunwale, or cast his eyes westward to where crowds of gulls were already settling on the point of Frampton sands. Far off beyond these, a ketch had dropped anchor in the variable channel running between them and the Noose, with other craft far beyond that and over towards Brims. We made amazing way when the currents carried us into the main channel itself, and we must certainly have come a good deal more than a mile and a half when all of

a sudden the boat checked and swung round, as if some invisible hand had caught and was holding her.

We had run on to a mud ledge, Ainslie's first remark being—"Come on ; let's bathe !" The mud bank was, for mud, sound enough ; but on reaching the smooth inviting sands themselves, he was very soon up to his knees. Bathe, however, he would, on gaining firmer ground, while I remained in the boat, that, by degrees, fell slowly over on her side. There was a mile of sand bare in no time, and the cry of many gulls came from far and near. The sun was sinking slowly into mist after a brilliant May day, but it of course never struck us that this very certainly meant fog. "The tide will turn, later on," remarked Ainslie—"and take us back again ; it will be all right !" He was full of confidence and was putting on his clothes, after finding a stretch of harder ground where he could run for half a mile and dry himself.

Everything out here was on a large scale. There was space on these sands and on the wide, eddying waters—the very voices of the gulls, far and near, declared it : there was space in the cloudless sky overhead that was now rapidly losing its blueness ; and there was

space, again, on the long sweep of level shore over towards the Tumps and the great marshes below Denton. Only one item in it all was small, and small to minuteness—our two selves, and our newly tarred dinghy lying on its side some hundreds of yards now from any water.

Ainslie kept singing his favourite tunes. I never saw him happier. The sands were drying, and we began amusing ourselves, after the inconsequent fashion of boys, in searching for things that the tide might possibly have left behind. The light of the sun was slowly waning; and presently, on looking up, I remember remarking to Ainslie that the shore had disappeared from view.

“By Jove; so it has,” he said—“it’s only a fog, what larks! Yes,” he continued, a few moments later, when we were following our own footsteps back towards the boat—“yes, I expect they’ll have a job to find us; but John will guess it, and he knows everything.”

At that moment, and a little later when it became dark, with the haze of fog overhead lit by the rising moon, we certainly found comfort in what we felt to be John Gratian’s omniscience; and as Ainslie now remarked—“he had been often castaway and all the rest;

but he had never seemed to come to grief entirely." "Of course there'll be trouble over this," he added presently—"and I am sorry. It can't be helped. It is all my fault, because, you see, you are staying with me."

The logic might perhaps have been difficult for others to follow, but I understood his meaning, while I sat on the gunwale of the boat, feeling bitterly cold and wondering if we were to be there all night, or whether this last of many escapades meant drowning ere the morning. The fog, shortly after that, shut down on us somewhat thicker, and a light air sprung up from the east. There was intense silence everywhere; the gulls had gone to bed, and the water had receded far away.

"Listen, and count," said Ainslie, suddenly. "Did you hear that? Why, that's our church clock at home, striking ten."

How long after that it was before help came neither of us knew, for we were both asleep when rough hands shook us into consciousness. Two figures with lanterns stood over us; and one was swearing loudly, till stopped by John Gratian's voice, crying—"Dry up, I tell yer; bain't there been trouble enough over this job a'ready? Bain't the good Squire's lady pretty well frightened into fits; and the Squire hisself

gone up and all over to make a search inland? Bain't that enough, wi'out your a-temptin' th' Almighty with all your gaff? Well, then, dry up and leave the lads to me!"

What happened then I do not quite know. I learnt afterwards that the dinghy had belonged to the ketch we had seen, and that the owner had come ashore to interview Gratian about coals. On returning to the banks he had found his boat gone, and being unable to see anything of her anywhere, had made his way back to the Gore Arms to acquaint honest John of the fact. It was not till later that news reached them of our disappearance, when John had put two and two together without more ado, and subsequently, by his close knowledge of Severn tides and currents, had hit off our whereabouts exactly.

But one matter in that night's adventure will always remain with me, and this has to do with what happened on our reaching land again. The fact that there were rarely any boats down there had thrown the Squire off the scent; but he had stopped to ask news of Gratian when driving back through the village, and learnt from others where his friend had gone.

It was already past eleven o'clock when the

Squire turned his horse to drive at once as far as wheels would take him, and from there to find his way on foot to the shore above the Tumps. He was standing there alone when we came ashore in the silvery fog and the glint of the moon on the rippling water. He never said anything, beyond—"Come on, both of you, as quick as you can;" Ainslie putting in, in penitent fashion—"It was my fault, father; it was all my fault."

Then there was silence. We had half a mile to tramp to reach the trap, and during the whole of the time the Squire never uttered a word. "If he had only spoken," said Ainslie to me, long afterwards, "it wouldn't have hurt so much;" and I remember that I felt the same myself. It might have been unpleasant to receive the reprimand he, above all others, could administer when he felt wrong had been done, though with never a bad word intermixed. But in this case he was absolutely silent—both then and afterwards—and I am convinced of this, that this very silence on his part went deeper home in my case, and I believe in Ainslie's also, than any punishment we in after days received as schoolboys.

I was driven home early the next morning by our intimate friend, William Welfare, the

Gores' head coachman. He pulled a long face when I came out to the door, and then whispered as we started—"Oh dear—oh dear: got into a mess this time, then, eh? And this note, look ye, have got to go with you, look. Dear—dear; well, there; you an' Master Ainslie is just a pair, to be sure."

For some time after that Ainslie and I did not see quite so much of one another. The Squire adopted the plan of taking Ainslie about himself wherever he went at Denton, and thus began the training that shall be referred to later on. It was, however, somewhat unfortunate that during the very first week of their closer intercourse an event should have occurred nearly costing Ainslie his life.

Some alterations were being carried out at the Gore Arms; the parlour being enlarged and two bedrooms added above, much to John Gratian's satisfaction. Something had gone wrong at the top of the new gable, and the Squire turned to Ainslie and said—"Here; you can put that right. Run up that ladder, only take care what you are about."

It was a good height up, and having attended to the point, Ainslie stepped back, calling—"Is that right, father?" The next moment he was in the air. He had trodden on a false

board at the top of the scaffolding, then in course of being taken down. There was no time even for an exclamation. Ainslie turned two complete somersaults, and just before reaching the flagstones of the yard, shot out one arm and caught a rope-end, dropping on to his feet and then falling backwards into Gratian's arms.

"Well!" exclaimed the honest John, who had turned crimson in the face—"there's odds in boys, or I'm very much mistook!"

The Squire remained fixed to the spot where he was standing, and was for the moment speechless. But he quickly recovered himself, and with the air of one—so Ainslie said—to whom some personal injury had been done, remarked—"If you go on like this, my dear boy, you will run through all your lives before we can stop you: even a cat has only nine."

To which Ainslie, when he had recovered from his giddiness, replied—"It was a funny thing, father; but you and Gratian looked as if you were standing upside down!"

"I don't wonder at it, I'm sure," returned the Squire; adding with a smile that looked half guilty, half shy—"I think, on the whole, we had better say nothing about it to anyone:

your mother might wonder where it was all going to stop."

Personally, I fancy that Ainslie must have expended all his so-called lives before he reached sixteen, the loss of his ninth being the nearest total loss of all. I was not actually present on this occasion, and the story shall presently be told.

We were about together again when the next summer holidays came round, having then left our first school for good, with Eton for both of us in the near future. At home and at school Ainslie had latterly been developing his taste for music, and, possibly owing to his being now left more alone than heretofore, his liking also for reading. He was often strumming on the piano when I rode my pony over to Denton, and occasionally, when he could not at first be found, he was eventually discovered curled in a big arm-chair and immersed in a book in the great library.

When disturbed in this way he did not at once rouse himself, appearing as if his mind was still occupied by what he had been either reading or trying to play. The house was large, and he was often very solitary ; the lives of his parents being so full that weeks would sometimes go by without anyone coming to stay at Denton.

Personally, I think that to this must be largely attributed much of the dreaminess there was afterwards about him, his intense reserve and love of solitude. He never lost any of his boyish gaiety and love of life—indeed, he never lost a particle of these or of his geniality, his ready manner and large-heartedness, to the end of his days; but gradually, and from this time onwards, I realise now that a certain seriousness began slowly to declare itself in him, till it grew to be a definite part of his character.

Such traits made no sort of difference to his natural liking for an outdoor life, its sports and games and touch with nature. He might lose himself in a book, or in reading through some new thing that his mother—herself an excellent pianist—had recently discovered. But in the next instant he would bang the lid of the piano or fling down his book, and be climbing the hill in the park or threading the rides of the woods, to see if he could find Giles Merrett or any of his under men.

It was no doubt on one of these strolls by himself in the heart of the woods that he marked a wood-pigeon's nest in an elder bush. There had been an outcry against these birds, and as to reach the nest in this case was impossible, he quickly devised some other

means of attack. At that time, I recall, we were spending, quite unknown to our elders, all our spare cash in pistols and gunpowder, casting our own bullets with lead we stripped from the house gutters on the roof. It was a July day when Ainslie ensconced himself beneath the shade of that elder bush, vowing that he would remain there till dark, and intent, as Merrett subsequently remarked when he heard the story—"on blowing the old bird down, nest and eggs and all—an' a very good job if he had, for them cushats be nothin' less than pests, they be, and eats a power of our pheasants' feed of a mornin', that 'em do."

The day was a sultry one, and the watch was long. By way of passing time, Ainslie had begun playing with the pistol, when, as he afterwards described it to me, "the beastly thing suddenly went off, the bullet going straight through the brim of my hat in front of my forehead. I can tell you," he added, "that when I could see, I got up and left that pigeon's nest to itself, feeling cold all over. Of course what you say is quite true. They might have taken days to find the body; and when they did they would have found it stark, with a pistol in its hand. Nice business!"

"They would have brought it in as suicide for a certainty," I remarked.

"Yes," he returned, with a loud laugh—

"A dozen men sat on his corpse,
To find out how he died—
And they buried Ben in the four cross-roads
With a *stake* in his inside."

I think he said his father had latterly been reading Hood's poems to him, and that he had committed some of these to memory.

The following month we left for Eton, attended by our respective fathers—both old Etonians, who appeared to regard the occasion as one for much hilarity and many reminiscences.

As for ourselves, we knew that an immense world was about to open before us and that of this we were to form a part, and I think we were immeasurably proud of the fact. Looking back now, we seem on that day to have passed one of those milestones in life that we all do from time to time, and that make us feel suddenly older. We were not yet quite fourteen, but we were already, in outlook, older by a year than we had been when we left our private school two months before. Childhood was left finally behind, and boyhood had come to occupy its place, with an increasing liking for wildly foolish boyish escapades of all kinds,

though these now took on a different colour and were marked by different characteristics.

There was at no time any sign on Ainslie's part of loss of the love of adventure, more especially where a spice of danger was discernible. Whether at school or at home he was always ready for anything, remaining quick and alert on all occasions, and throwing his whole heart into everything he found to do. But at the same time the dreaminess that I had latterly remarked in him seemed now to become more noticeable. He slowly developed a keen love of the beautiful: his liking for music, that was afterwards so much a part of him, became a passion; he took more and more to reading whenever he could get the time; and by degrees became in many ways an idealist, just as, later, he also grew to be, and remained always, something of a mystic. This development went on in him, I think, very slowly at first; but the quiet and beauty of his home, as also, in some ways, his Eton life, served now to accentuate it.

He was already a boy of exceptional ability. His school work had from the first come easily to him; and on entering Eton, he was placed as high as was then possible—taking, as we say, Remove. At the outset, the throb of the

new life here puzzled him : there was so much to do ; so little time to do it in. The very rush of the day's work—an hour here, another there, with the games, the cooking one's own tea and breakfast, all the quaint observances, sandwiched in between ; the fagging and the strange phraseology of the place ; the rule of boy over boy ; the incessant call to be up and doing something all day long, in this place of beautiful buildings set amidst still more beautiful surroundings—all this, no doubt, bewildered him, as it had done countless others, and at first he liked to get away alone along the banks of the river in the Playing Fields, where they were deserted at this football season of the year.

The phase with him did not last long. A wise enactment allowed a new boy to wander much as he liked for the first fortnight, that he might find his way about ere the fagging and the rest began. But many days before this short period had expired, Ainslie had already been caught by the countless eddies of this great stream of young life, and carried bodily out into its midst. More than that : he quickly discerned the meaning of what he saw around him, and threw his whole heart and soul into the affairs of every day.

The whole atmosphere and surroundings of this wonderful place appealed to him; and Eton, exercising her countless fascinations, took him by the hand and made of him one of her true sons. He knew it, and often afterwards referred to it. The stream would flow on, at ever-increasing pace—there would come the banks and the shallows and the shifting sands; but here was good outfit to be had for each one's craft. And more—there reigned also a great spirit in this place, and to all who came it was bequeathed, that they might, so choosing, carry it with them out into the wide estuary and the full flood, for their voyage on a limitless sea.

CHAPTER III

ETON DAYS

WE were resting on Sheep's Bridge when he said it—one summer Sunday evening, when the life of the greatest of Schools was in full swing and the summer half at its zenith. Sunday necessarily always brought a pause in those activities of the week that seemed to us then to be nothing less than the contests of giants, fit to move whole worlds. To some minds possibly they appear so still; but however this may be, Sunday afforded an interval for thought, if also for much gossip—as to who, for instance, would get his colours for Lord's, who fill the last remaining thwart in the Eight for Henley; what House had the best chance of winning the House Cup or the House Fours, and who were the likeliest to carry off the Sculling or the Pulling and the rest of the many great events.

These were the things that really mattered to the majority in that busy world; and if training and practice were suspended one day

in seven, it was only fitting, in the leisure hours thus afforded, that such matters should be discussed and estimates revised. On the morrow the contests would reopen and the play of energies be renewed—the whole wide stream of life, with its chances and infinite possibilities, being laid out and burnished anew : for the moment, all the boats of many forms were locked in the Brocas sheds, and a hushed stillness reigned in our historic Playing Fields.

We had been discussing many such things as we strolled, and were at the moment leaning over the old, worn stone-coping of the bridge, watching the clear brown water from Fellows' Pond as it trickled over the stone ledge below and found its way in many rivulets to the wide and silent river in the fuller light beyond the trees. Trees, indeed, stood on all hands. Huge elms met high above our heads : away to the left, three broad avenues separated Upper—from Middle Club, and in the opposite direction, some dozen giants, two or more centuries in age, brought the pageant to an end—standing as great sentinels on the margin of Aquatics and Upper Sixpenny, or over against the famous Wall, casting now their faint shadows on the

soft, short turf as the long summer day drew slowly to a close.

"Yes," he said—"I have quite made up my mind to be a soldier. The Army is the place. There is nothing like it, as you say—nothing! Perhaps the love of it is born in us. We have been soldiers for generations, just like your people. My father was a soldier, you know, and so was my grandfather—the one fought in the Crimea and the other in the Peninsula. But it goes back much further than that, for among the portraits at home there are many more, especially one of a fair-haired fellow who looks not much older than us, and who fell at Newbury, fighting for the King. It must have been painted, they say, very shortly before his death. He is attractive enough in his gay clothes, I can tell you; with his fair locks on his shoulders and his dark eyes full of fun. But of course you know the picture—I forgot. Doesn't his face take you? It does me. And I often stop and look at it, and feel that I envy him awfully. Shouldn't I just about have liked to have lived then!"

His voice, even at that date, was singularly musical and of low tone, and as he dilated in boyish fashion and we discussed the course in life we would mutually take, it seemed to grow

in richness, the tinkle of the stream below filling in the pause between the sentences. He was habitually possessed, as I have said, of a certain seriousness even in his boyhood, though the real depth of this was seldom shown, save to his intimates. Thus it was that the majority never suspected any trait of the kind. He might be all that some said he was—reserved, modest, retiring, thoughtful; but he hid such things successfully away, and what those about him saw was one possessed of intense joyousness of life—who was vigour personified, and who regarded all things from a sunny outlook.

The bells in Lupton's Tower had chimed the hour and then struck eight on one of deeper tone ere we moved away that evening from the bridge—the ancient brick walls ahead of us glowing blood-red in the level rays of the sun, the golden light scintillating in the lattice of many a window. Silence had already settled on those Playing Fields of wondrous beauty by the time we turned into the cool cloisters and emerged into School Yard, our conversation still running on the same theme—this line we were to take in life, this pledge that we had given each other to follow the

calling of our respective forbears, lead where it might.

The weighty decision we had come to appeared in some mysterious way to have suddenly deepened our outlook on life: the world for us had altered from that moment. We were to be together, right through—to serve the greatest of Queens living up in the Castle that dominated the whole peaceful valley, and if need be lay down our lives for her and for the Country. It was all very romantic; but all, to us, in our boyish fancies, very real.

At this time he and I were just sixteen, an age when scales are apt to fall from boyish eyes and foothold to be looked for with increasing earnestness. The future occasionally presents itself at such an hour with startling suddenness, as something to be reckoned with and definitely faced. It had done so now with us. Previous to this its claims had been few, and there was something wholly intangible about it: it lay outside our province altogether, and need not concern us seriously in any way. But now, many roads had begun to show themselves, leading away into the distance, and from these came the sound of many voices calling always—"Come along!"

In the babel of sound it is not easy to decide

which of all these voices is to be listened to. Fear moreover has its place. Up to this, certainties had been the lot of nearly the whole company: out there, uncertainty had now become apparent. And from the distance had come also this strange call ringing in the ears—the call of the world as the call of the wild; this appeal to the instincts; this claim upon the next batch of young lives that shall fight and struggle, and love and pray, carrying on the work of the world till the next call comes and a long sleep closes wistful eyes. Unconsciously the great appeal continues always to exert its influence; consciously it accepts neither hesitation nor denial; and thus it comes about that the children of men obey the summons, and step out into life as soldiers in the army of God.

From that day forward our decision was never altogether absent from our minds. Not that we often spoke of it or put our thoughts into words, but we certainly set our course with the aims we had in view. I remember, for instance, that we agreed together never, either at school or in the holidays, to shun exposure to weather, but rather to invite it, wet or shine, night or day. So also with bodily exertion—the harder the work, the more readily we were

to engage in it. If any of those about us appeared to hang back we were to spring forward without hesitation, and the more risky the job the better. What we had to do was to make ourselves physically fit by every means in our power, and at the same time learn how to take the lead. And over and above this, we were to try to acquire the habit of bearing pain without flinching, to cultivate the spirit of endurance, to be chivalrous on all occasions, to show least what we felt most. The day would come when a claim would be made on us; we must get into training therefore and be prepared.

Thus, while we laid down for ourselves a rule of life, and our boyish fancies continued to conjure up a multitude of things that came more and more to be stern realities to us, a number of ideals were also always before our minds. And especially was this so in Ainslie's case. All through his life it was only necessary for him to espouse a cause, for that cause to become idealised. He would weave about it all manner of fancies, and clothe it in garments of colours unknown to human eyes; and when, in his imagination, it had become transfigured—often to a degree that he never appeared to realise—he, metaphorically speaking, set this

idol of his creation on a pedestal and gave himself to it heart and soul.

It was the same with him in more serious matters. His faith, his standard of morals—of cleanness, truth and honesty—his idea of what a man should be at all points and in all ways, his sense of duty—of what was right and, above all, what was just ; all these were to him the essentials of existence. In defence of them he must be prepared to fight and to give his all, if called upon so to do ; and in each case the level of his keen desires stood far higher than that which human fallibility makes ordinarily possible.

Nor was it by any means different in the current of his school life. No matter whether it was an eleven in which he had won a place, a society to which he had been elected, the House whereat he boarded, this School of which he was a member—these were all alike either the best, or to become the best so far as he could help in his small way to make them. They were first and before all his, and they invariably stood in his mind as so many symbols.

Thus behind the elevens to which he belonged or those contests in which he continually took part, he had visions of fights of sterner kind that would some day come for

him in other fields ; and this great School that he so passionately loved, never failed to present to his mind the counterpart of that life in the wider world that would shortly open for him and for each and all in this great company.

The past history of the place was to him therefore an inspiration and was constantly in his mind. He re-peopled it with the great of bygone times, conjuring up anew the forms of leaders in the field, statesmen and divines—of poets, writers and musicians, no less than that host of humbler men, “the unknown great,” as he habitually called them, who had trod these very flagstones, whose voices had echoed here, and who had then gone out and tried to make some corner of the world a better, happier place, so long as life were granted them.

The very beauty of its setting appealed to him to an almost measureless extent ; and its spirit—the spirit of Eton—however undefinable, was to him a priceless heritage, to be fostered and safeguarded by each and all ; not as a matter of mere sentiment, but as something rarely found elsewhere, and that was limitless for good the world over. He could not shut his eyes to the darker faults he saw about him. But if such were part of an in-

explicable whole, he never failed to try to stamp them out wherever met with. To him good and evil necessarily had place here as in the world outside. But with the intensity of faith that was his, he never ceased to believe that purity would declare herself as the handmaid of the one, and that beauty was there to redeem and to clothe the other anew. Thus of the ultimate triumph of good he never entertained a doubt.

"My dear fellow," he would say, with that sunny smile of his—his eyes growing darker as he spoke—"don't you see that good is bound to win because it is so infinitely the more powerful of the two? To doubt that, for an instant, seems to me to try to make out that Almighty God is less powerful than the Author of all Evil. There are plenty of things outside to shame us, and there are plenty here to show that we are no better than others and have no right to pretend to be so. But no one is going to make me doubt that the influences we have about us in this place are not going to assert themselves and make for a wider, purer regeneration. I tell you it is impossible! There are black sheep among us, of course. It could not be otherwise with a thousand of us packed together here. But

just think how much blacker the blackest would in all likelihood have been if he had never been here at all!"

The ultimate victory of any cause he had at heart seemed sometimes to mean everything to him; but in the athletic contests of the day, victory—the mere fact of winning—did not appear ever to appeal to him in the way that it did to most. If success in a great annual match meant further honour for his School, or securing a challenge cup meant the same for his already famous House, it stood to reason that they must be won. But I think, as a rule, he derived his chief pleasure from the actual contest rather than from the, possibly, victorious outcome. He trained his House elevens for success, and to the very utmost of his power; but he also taught them first to play the game, and to accept defeat with dignity. "Play for your side," he would say—"don't play for yourself—that's poor form; and if we are beaten, take the licking with a good grace, and say nothing."

He always carried into every contest, no matter what it was, a firm belief in his own side. That he was often beaten, goes without saying. But when his idol on such occasions necessarily came tumbling to the ground with

a run and he reaped the fruits of all idealists, he might look grave, or even break into a laugh ; but he at once set his idol up again on a firmer and higher pedestal, and marched on, head up as before.

At the date when he and I, on that summer Sunday evening, laid down the course we would mutually take in life, we were entering upon the period when athletic honours in school life are reaped to the full if reaped at all. In his first summer half he had chosen the river and showed signs of becoming a wet-bob ; but unlike many another boy who, once on the river, is content to drift along with the stream and often in aimless fashion, he altered his course before the half had run out.

The river had appealed to him in the first instance by its beauty—its whispering willows, its nodding rushes that the circling eddies played with all day long, the wealth of flowers along the banks, with the great, historic Castle in the sunlight backing in the whole. This river, with its clear depths and its placid stream that never varied very greatly throughout the heart of the year, differed altogether from the river of his home. He had never seen

anything like it before. Here there was the beauty of a pretty face. Away in the west, the river was stern and sombre of aspect, with a strength underlying it that took no denial and that punished tricks, that linked hands directly with the mighty tides, and spoke in deep notes with the voice of a man.

The pretty face had conquered Ainslie at the outset; but it failed to hold him, however great its charms might be to a nature such as his. At first he was enthusiastic. "The river," he would exclaim—"the river is splendid! They say it's the cradle here of the finest oarsmen in England, you know, and therefore in the world. Just think of that!"

Then slowly there came a change, and at the same time an inner appeal for a wider field for his energies. Paddling up and down this stream, with no prospect of a place in the Boats for a year or two, failed to satisfy him. Contemplation, when tucked in under the pol-lards while the hours ran by, or lying in the sun beneath a hedge of willow herb and purple loosestrife six feet high, had much that was congenial to him, just as the beauty of this pretty face made mute appeal to his heart. But there was the other side in him that claimed no less a hearing, and that was destined to

speak out more strongly with the coming of the years, when the man of action should have sprung to life.

In his home he had always been an enthusiastic cricketer, taking his part with the village team in many a funny match, in which the originality of some of the members' favourite strokes was only surpassed by the witticisms and general hilarity of the company. He arrived in my room one day during the latter part of our first summer half with a new ball in his hand, and asked me to come with him to Sixpenny. Then he habitually went to Upper Club to watch the great School matches, taking note of everything he saw, his whole being rising to a pitch of enthusiasm at the skill of a bowler, a dash in of cover-point and a pretty piece of fielding, a hit that took the ball clear out of the ground.

There was beauty, even greater beauty, here—in these great round-topped trees, with their purple shadows and broad spaces of reflected sunlight, the level turf, the old red walls and the sound of the bells. It was different altogether from what that other had afforded and that was still visible with silvery gleam beneath the trees, and it told him a different story. The pretty face had had to make way for

something more stately and of deeper import. There was more of continual vigour here : the whole air was filled with the sound of bat and ball, shrill cries and boyish voices, and was redolent of life and utmost joy of living. And thus by slow degrees, other arms wound their way about him, and this other, statelier beauty led him by the hand. The Brocas saw him no more, and at the same time a new bowler was discovered in Sixpenny.

He never forsook his first love altogether. He always took part in his Form's sweepstakes, and certainly on one occasion won them in company with another. He even in later years raised a dry-bob Four in his House to compete in the bumping races, and as he said—"just for the sport of the thing." "No idea of getting to the top of the river need trouble us," he added. "The fun will be to row against these wet-bobs, even though we get a good ducking, probably have to stand some chaff, and no doubt come in a good last. Anyway, we must have a try, and the river is always lovely!"

It was never his way to do things by halves, and he threw himself more and more into cricket throughout his Eton life, winning in the end those colours that were, to many here,

more than any title, rank or decoration in the world. And after his manner he also built up in his own mind all kinds of mystical ideas about this greatest of games, till it became in a way one of his standards. Cricket, to him, stood for a claim for straightness of conduct on all occasions, just as a straight bat was of its essence. "A fellow has got to abide by the rules," he would say, "stand his ground and defend his own wicket ; and what is more, he has also to abide by his sentence from the other end, whatever it be, just in the same way that he has by his own actions in a wider field if he makes a fool of himself, or by his word if he has once said *dixi* !" And then again, over and above all this, he always believed that cricket had played no mean part in making a Nation, and here the history of this game was to him nothing less than a romance.

It is not my intention to set out in this place his doings either as a field, a bat or a bowler. He had his successes in playing for his School, at Lord's and Winchester and elsewhere ; but such things are written in other books, and do not loom so large now for us in these later days. One thing, however, in connection with his getting his colours shall be mentioned, because it shows how his actions sometimes

caused him to be misunderstood by those who did not know him well.

To be given your colours for the Eleven, or, as the custom was in those days, to be told "you might get your colours," was to run down town and to appear in them an hour later, no less than to order "flannels" at your tailor's to be put in hand at once. But Ainslie never did anything quite like ordinary people, the result being that he was still wearing his twenty-two colours the next day, and his tailor had come to the conclusion that he had lost his custom.

To be guilty of action of the kind in such a company as this was to run the risk of hostile criticism, and some were not behindhand in putting Ainslie's remissness down to swagger, further uncomplimentary remarks being added at the same time. He was, of course, wholly innocent of all the things attributed to him, and when several of his friends pointed out that his forgetfulness might be taken as an insult, he ran at once to the Captain's House and apologised to him profusely.

The matter was, I know, a genuine distress to him, though what he had done, or forgotten to do, exactly reflected his character. To his mind, had he given the point any thought

whatever, haste to appear in new colours, even if these were the first in the School, would not have appealed in any way: he had won his place in the Eleven, and would appear as he should in the next match a few days hence: that, to his thinking, was quite sufficient. It was always the same with him. When he had done anything and earned the plaudits of his fellows, his first desire was to escape from notice as quickly as he could. To pose, or to play to the gallery, would have been an impossibility with him: he was at all points essentially a gentleman, and would consequently have dubbed such doings as so much snobbishness.

In the half succeeding that in which he became a member of the Eleven, he won his colours for the Field and the Oppidan Wall. Football, especially the Field game, suited him even better than cricket: he loved the actual combat, the fever of the fight, and the test of physical strength. No prettier game was ever devised for boys than Eton football. It is very quick and calls for agility of foot, great activity, plenty of dash and pluck, together with full command of temper and rapid decision at every moment. Ainslie excelled in it for many reasons, and being a first-rate runner his place was generally corner.

Character declares itself in all games, and Ainslie's came out here. His play was at all times without trace of jealousy, and showed how fully aware he was that individual prominence and success were of less value to a side than unselfish combination. Whether in the Field, or in House games in South Meadow—where he trained us carefully as Captain—he threw himself heart and soul into the crisis of the moment, and I can hear his ringing voice still, and see his tall, lissom figure—capless, breathless and mud-bespattered—often leading us to victory when defeat seemed perilously imminent.

But there was another direction in which at this time he also began to make his mark. His successes in the field of athletics had necessarily led to his being elected to Pop—the august assembly that has for generations represented in its select and limited company the élite and most distinguished in the School. He was ever independent in his opinions and actions, and if this led, as has been shown, to his being sometimes misunderstood outside, and often through his own fault, it was no less so within the doors of the Eton Society. There was a certain quiet detachment about him that provoked criticism in other natures. He did

not hesitate to say what he meant on all occasions—not in any spirit of wrong-headedness, much less of bumptiousness, but because he had formed those opinions to the best of his ability and was resolved to stand by them. At all times he had the strongest sense of justice, and in the event of a course taken by another being obviously wrong he spoke out totally regardless of the cost, and no matter who his opponent might be. It was always the same with him, even in his younger days, and I remember two small incidents of the kind occurring when he had been at the School no more than a year.

As a Lower Boy he had stood at the head of Remove, his name being the second to be called at Absence. It was thus necessary for him to be extremely punctual. On arriving in School Yard one day he found his name had been passed, and that the Lower Master was already some dozen down the list. At the second calling over came the question, before the inevitable *pœna*—"Why were you not here?" "Because you began calling before the time, Sir." "Impertinence!" exclaimed the Master, warmly. "I beg your pardon, Sir; the clock had not struck when you began," returned Ainslie again, looking up with

that irresistible smile of his as a boy. The statement was so absolutely honest that the Master was defeated—"You may go," he said, with scant grace.

The other incident had to do with our dear old Tutor. Ainslie was never an adept at Latin prose writing; he never mastered the knack of it, and as it was a test subject in all examinations, it was necessary that he should pay especial attention to it. I forget now what the point was; but our Tutor became quite cross with him at what he called his "extraordinary denseness." Ainslie, who had been resting his forehead on the palm of one hand, with the fingers in his hair, looked up and asked—"Why are you cross with me, Sir? I can assure you I am trying my very best."

Our Tutor recalled the incident in conversation with me many years afterwards, and added—"I learnt a lesson then that I never forgot. The boy's face was enough, without his words. I felt ashamed of myself. But there was always something remarkable about Gore, and towards the close of that wonderfully successful career of his at the School, it often seemed to me that a mysterious influence for good flowed from his every act."

Though the Eton Society, better known as

Pop, is in a way a club, it is primarily a debating society, at least two Prime Ministers having made their first flights in oratory there as boys, and many a score of distinguished names appearing on the records of its proceedings. To become a member is to inherit no ordinary traditions; and since Pop is also a kind of court of reference and holds certain disciplinary powers, these elected few have a very definite position in the School.

The tone and atmosphere of its rooms naturally varied according to our leaders at the moment. Members came and went in quick succession, as this great stream of young life launched its members out into the breezy tide-way. Eton is always marked by a ready wit, and a no less ready power of repartee. There was plenty of such in Pop, and if, outside, its members walked with dignity more or less assumed, these historic little rooms were often the scene of uproarious mirth, together with much banter, when boyish spirits asserted themselves and a staid decorum was judged to be no longer supportable.

But while such conditions undoubtedly ruled from time to time, and even Pop bowed to the powers that were and followed the reigning spirits of the day, debates were nevertheless

often conducted with due formality, the manners and customs of another place being followed somewhat closely. To look through the volumes of its proceedings now, especially where great names figure—the speeches being recorded in the handwriting of the speakers—is to be struck by the level often reached in these debates of bygone days. The opinions that some held then may be the very opposite of those advanced in public now; but the ability exhibited in their presentment does not differ as greatly as many might suppose.

The members were by no means only athletes; there were also scholars and students of many subjects, whose hearts were far from games. Apart from the wit, the fun and the merry laughter that marked so many of our days, dialectics formed the common atmosphere of these rooms, considerable heat being often engendered when the members took sides and the current topics of the day were discussed. In the case of formal debates, speeches were often prepared with great care, and delivered to an attentive audience. Apt quotations, especially from the classics, were received with a smile of approval; and if cheers greeted the close of a popular speaker's perora-

tion, opinions at variance with the accepted traditions of the School always raised a storm of interruption.

No doubt our proceedings were often marked by boyish exuberance of spirits, no less than by that cocksureness that was a part of all of us when in our 'teens. It would have been strange had this not been so. Youth, with gay heart, always knows better than the man; and the middle-aged may be dismissed, by way of compliment, as "has beens," or even something still less graceful. That no doubt, for all reasons, is as it should be. At the same time, looking back now, I am unable to recall any of that disagreeable form of cocksureness in Ainslie Gore that we have all known. His opinions were never lightly surrendered. It used indeed to be said of him at this time that if he once got an idea in his head, he would stick to it, right or wrong. That was going much too far. He was difficult to move and could not be driven; but he was at all times open to conviction, and there was never any trace of bumptiousness in the way he advanced his theories or drove home his points. I often used to think that he regarded a debate or an argument much as he did a game, and that he carried it on for its own sake, though always

deprecating descent into mere contentious talk : of that he had a horror.

Occasions of course arose here when the questions before us were taken very seriously—comically so considering we were all boys. Nothing moved us more than any attack upon our existing institutions. We were for the most part strong Tories and staunch upholders of things as they were. And it was just here that Ainslie sometimes came into conflict with the majority. He was a reformer, and was therefore a firebrand to some, and he had little respect for anything that, to his thinking, had had its day and was obsolete.

No one ever loved this great School more than he ; no one respected its past history more deeply ; no boy in the place would have fought more valiantly in defence of a custom where he felt that it was really beneficial ; and no one, assuredly, realised more fully that hands were not to be lightly laid on this place of countless memories. But where, in this republic of boys, he fancied he discerned what was undesirable—no longer suited to the day that had come, or in conformity with the world outside—then he sprang forward and spoke his mind, though the whole School should be against him.

Such characteristics were naturally more noticeable in Pop than elsewhere, and it was here that he had to do battle in support of his ideals. When he felt anything keenly he habitually spoke with much vehemence and made use of many gestures; but when—especially in the earlier days of his membership—he was received with marked opposition and the ordinary courtesies of debate were thrown to the winds, he never lost control of himself or showed the slightest signs of temper in the retorts he made. Nor was there ever anything overbearing in his manner. That the opinions he was advancing might leave him in the minority of one when put to the vote, did not concern him. He was not going to give way when he felt he was right, unless a better man than he was there to convince him that he was wrong. Then, he was open to conviction and gave way with excellent grace. With him tenacity of purpose was a thing to be cultivated; but such should never be carried to the point where due reverence for the opinions of others was excluded. And he certainly grew to feel this more and more in subsequent years, when the atmosphere of radiant confidence was exchanged for a sterner

reality, and impulsive adolescence was checked at the touch of the world.

Opposition, then, he occasionally met with here ; but many will agree that the unfailing good-humour and charm of manner with which he habitually faced that opposition, won the ever-increasing respect of those from whom he differed most, and the affection of many who could not altogether agree with him. I shall never forget one occasion when he rose to wind up a debate on a question to do with the better maintenance of discipline in Houses as carried out by the boys themselves, and the changes that were desirable in furtherance of the same. He won some round to his point of view before he had done, and the debate was adjourned instead of being brought to a conclusion.

The room had been in an uproar ; and when, in the course of his remarks, he had made reflections upon the want of tone in certain quarters, every member appeared to be interrupting him at once. He remained standing, with a grave, thoughtful look on his face, waiting patiently for silence to be restored.

"I am sorry," he said, at last, in a voice that seemed to have fallen to an even lower tone than usual—"I am sorry if the reforms

I am myself anxious to see carried out do not commend themselves to many of you. Yet I do not believe that any member here present, and however deeply he may be opposed to me, will question my motives or doubt the deep love I have for all our institutions. These last belong to a past that we revere. For the time they are in our keeping. They reflect the deeds and opinions of others who were in all likelihood better men than ourselves. But conditions have changed and there is a demand for something different, as there must always be. Are we going to stultify ourselves by making no move where we see that reform is needed—and, as I believe, urgently needed? Are we going to confess our own impotence by failing to rise to a call that some at least here believe to be a very real one? If so, how may we hope to reconcile our want of initiative with the actions of those of whom I have just spoken and who worked to make this place what it has ultimately become. Many of you may think of the individual rights pertaining to your several high positions in the School; but I trust you will pardon the temerity of one of the younger members of this assembly, if I ask you whether you are going to think of your rights and forget your

duties? I tell you, Gentlemen, that nothing stands firm that stands on rights alone—nothing can ever so stand! Our several Houses are but part of a greater whole. If the tone of any of them falls from what it should be, is there anyone here prepared to deny that the School itself can hope to escape infection? Once again, I tell you that that cannot be so, and that we ourselves shall have to bear the blame!”

“We may not agree with all Gore says,” remarked one of a group of boys, strolling out of the yard into the roadway, with their hands in their pockets; “but from fighting him one somehow or other gets to love him, and his opinions don’t seem to matter a bit.”

“I know exactly what you mean,” agreed another. “I expect he’ll be Prime Minister one day, won’t he?”

“Bless your life, no!” interjected a third—“don’t you know he’s going for a soldier? He is always dreaming of it, I tell you.”

“Ainslie—? Food for powder—? Save us!”

The very idea seemed to take the last speaker quite aback

During his last year and a half at the School

he gradually rose to a position that can have been reached by few. He had a hand in everything, from cricket and football and fives, to the Volunteers in which he rose to be a sergeant, and the Beagles of which he was a whip and at one time acted as Master during the latter's illness. He was known to all. The small boys looked at him with awe: those a little older were flattered when he noticed them: his contemporaries were proud to be included in the circle of his friends. Not that he was the least exclusive. Among his friends and acquaintances boys were to be found of perfectly different natures and every standard of ability. The very diversity of his tastes compelled him to be cosmopolitan in such directions. He was large-hearted and unwittingly attracted others to himself, and thus he was able to find what he wanted in each in turn, being amused by some and gathering sympathy from others.

He could, at this time, meet many of those with whom he was thrown on their own ground, no matter what their interests and pursuits might be. He became one of the greatest athletes in the School; but he was an athlete in spite of himself. He could play all games just a little better than the majority. He ran

so well that he won the School Mile and the Steeplechase, and he habitually threw such vigour into all he did that it was not pleasant, for instance, to oppose him in a run down at football. He would rush down the ground then, with the ball close between his feet—calling to his side with clear, ringing voice to back up and come on—and finally break out into a shout of boisterous merriment when he had carried it between the posts and not seldom the discomfited goalkeeper with it. He appeared to be muscle all over; every muscle seemed on such occasions to be working, and very hard some of us found them when we did not happen to be playing on his side.

I have said that he was a great athlete. He was something more, and I always thought he showed this in a marked way on the day he won the School Steeplechase—the blue ribbon of all our athletic events. The morning was wet and the ground was heavy, the course being from the Sanatorium field to Eton Wick, then to the Butts, on to the second railway bridge, across by Willow Brook, to the time-honoured School Jump over Chalvey—a distance of about three miles.

Some of us accompanied the runners in the race that day, cutting across from point to

point. Five boys were more or less together in the leading group when the last fence was cleared, one of whom was Ainslie. The School Jump lay two hundred yards ahead, with the winning-post some thirty yards beyond it. A vast concourse of boys there thronged both banks of the stream, and shouts were already being raised for this or that favourite.

Two of the five had fallen back half-way across the last field, and Ainslie was only three yards behind the leader. They reached School Jump together, and scrambled out of the water together, amidst the deafening shouts of the on-lookers. They were neck and neck for the first ten of those crucial thirty yards: then Ainslie shot ahead and won by only a short distance. It had been one of the finest races that had ever been run over the course, and he had fairly won it; but the very first thing he did—and he was a year and more younger than the boy he had just beaten—was to go and look for this last in the cheering crowd, out of breath as he was, and say to him, quickly—"It was as much your race as mine, really." Then he escaped as soon as he could, and we returned to my Dame's together.

The day happened to be a half-holiday, and I found him in his room that afternoon, absorbed

in a volume of the Elizabethan poets, as if still wishing to keep out of the way.

He looked up when I entered, and said as he rose from his chair and began pacing the floor—"Here; read that—read that! Isn't it fine?" Then he repeated the first two and last two lines from a stanza of a lyric of Shirley—

"The garlands wither on your brow.
Then boast no more your mighty deeds!

Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

Or this," he continued, snatching the book from my hand—"this *Integer Vitæ* of Thomas Campion. Here it is, look—

"The man of life upright,
Whose guiltless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds,
Or thought of vanity . . ."

The poetry he had been reading seemed to have set his mind on fire, and presently when I put the book down, he burst out with—

"Come on; let's go up to St. George's. There is plenty of time; the service isn't till four. It will cool us down."

A quarter of an hour later we were entering the Chapel from the cloisters. It had been our

habit during all our Eton days to go there on short after fours from time to time. For one thing, the organist, Sir —, was an intimate friend of Ainslie's, taking great interest in his love for music, and indeed, I believe, being never absent from the School concerts when Ainslie was playing or singing at those popular entertainments. It was through this friend that Ainslie's love of Bach had originated, and there was little doubt what the closing voluntary would be when he was up in the organ-loft.

We had only to take our stand at the narrow doorway opening on to the flight of stone steps in the wall leading up into this last, and our place for the service was assured. The old man merely gave us a nod as he unlocked the door that day, taking it for granted what we were there for.

There were sometimes one and sometimes two assistants present, to pull out the stops and learn what they might, by watching the doings of one who was said then to be the finest accompanist of the Psalms ever known. Ainslie would take his place either at the back of the player, or at the small kneeling-desk on the left, looking down on to the floor of the Chapel—the banners of the Knights of the Garter just above his head, the in-

tense silence only broken by a deep-toned bell, apparently far away ; by the footsteps of those few who attended the service as they passed up the nave, or the careless shutting of a door.

In the enclosed choir itself, the silence was the silence of the grave, the dim religious light being that of many candles ; the thousand brasses that covered the back of the old oak stalls catching a gleam now and again, and always with those emblazoned Knights' banners overhead to tell their story. There is no place quite like that in the world, and it was never without its effect upon us as boys, speaking to Ainslie especially, I think, by reason of the beautiful refinement on every hand, the subdued colouring and general richness, and the wide space of National history that is there enshrined.

The Psalms for the day included the 78th, and Ainslie's face was lit with delight when Sir —— never missed an opportunity, verse by verse, and a whole volume of sound went travelling along the groined roof to find echo in a hundred arches. I saw the old man bend down to the boy from his seat as the Grace was being said, and fancied I heard Ainslie whisper—"Yes, play the great *G minor*."

to be known by their Christian names alone, and throughout a School of a thousand boys.

The days of youth were drawing to an end, and the summer half had come round for the last time for both of us. Three months hence would see us boys no longer in the true sense : the gay life of this place, with its colour and its song, would be at an end : Eton would have left its ineffaceable impress upon us, and we should have to go out, to begin at the bottom again, to clamber if we might in search always of those ideals that the majority have glimmer of, and that lie in the mists of the blue hills, or away in the depths of purer heavens overhead.

No doubts as to the margin of time that would be ours had, so far, ever crossed the mind. Life was assured—long life ; and all things were attainable. It was only necessary to step out to the sound of the drum, and there would follow victory ; to be followed in the end, of course, by peace. That last came for all : for the moment there was life, with eyes still undimmed, heart whole, strength that knew not tiredness, and soul unstained.

Ainslie's position in the School equalled if

it did not excel that of anyone here by reason of the record that lay behind. He also stood high in school work, and in his last half was one of the ten Oppidans in Sixth Form. His attainments were above the average, and the work he turned out was always good; but I question whether a classical curriculum was the one best suited to him. His tastes lay primarily in English Literature. He was fond of history and studied that of other countries besides his own. Military history had especial attractions for him, as has been said, and often in winter evenings when we should, perhaps, have been otherwise occupied, we would fight the battles of the Peninsular War over again, and he would sometimes repeat by heart Napier's famous page on the close of the great day of Albuera.

The Life of the Duke of Wellington and the story of Waterloo also engaged us, though, for many reasons, the History of the Crimean War was our greatest favourite. Kinglake's first volumes had appeared, and we read and re-read these, together with a much worn copy of Russell's *Letters*. He would often lament the fact that our proper studies were for the most part wholly classical. "I love Horace," he would say—"and also Virgil, and you and

I can follow with delight many a page in Thucydides, and laugh at the wit in the *Plays*. All the same, I do wish we had more of what is called elsewhere the Modern Side, and that they would occasionally teach us something different and let these verses and iambics drop out a bit."

He certainly always tried to remedy such conditions in his own case, and spent all the time he could snatch in reading the standard works of his own Country, both in the House library and also during the holidays. His memory was a very retentive one. He had no difficulty in learning by heart, and when once he had made a passage his own—or any lines that took his fancy—he never forgot them.

His favourites among the poets were Milton, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, with others of his own day, and he loved the sonnets and the lyrics of writers of earlier times and could repeat many of them. By this means he was often ready with a quotation that exactly fitted what he was talking about at the moment. Being no prig he seldom indulged in this habit unless alone with a personal friend; but now and then he would repeat a verse or two of Hood's *Faithless Nelly Gray*, Thackeray's *Chronicle of the Drum*, or some remark of

Sam Weller's or of Mr. Pickwick's, going into shouts of laughter at the thoughts they brought to his mind, and making others laugh by his mimicry.

He always possessed the keenest sense of fun, gathering amusement everywhere and seeing the funny side in everything that crossed his path. At the same time he would occasionally pass from grave to gay in a moment, as if the serious side that was always a part of him had got the upper hand. Certainly during our last half he often struck me as graver than he had been, though ready as ever to join in any fun that was to the fore. For the rest, his position now entailed much responsibility and a good deal of power, and I know that he felt this, and that it was necessary for him to study his actions very closely. It did not weigh on him. He acted no part. He was just himself at all times, and never anything but perfectly natural. But he measured his words more carefully, became far more moderate in the opinions he advanced in Pop, and without knowing it acquired a certain dignity. He had in fact gone to the top. Unconsciously he set a standard, and, as is always the case with leaders of men, he had the power of bringing out the very best in his subordinates.

Yet in this School, renowned for turning out leaders, I do not think he ever realised that he was now actually a leader himself, much less what a leader he was. His numberless successes had left him the most simple-minded being amongst us. It was characteristic of him, for instance, that though one or two cups necessarily stood on his mantelpiece, none of his many colours adorned the walls of his room. He disliked show of any kind, and also condemned all forms of adulation. Feelings of all sorts, however genuine, were to be restrained. What mattered first of all to him was the honour of his School: his own personal doings were insignificant in his eyes, and were certainly not to be talked about. He went his way among us quite unspoilt, and in that expressive phrase of Tacitus, "enjoyed the felicity of success with fortitude."

During the five and a half years that he had spent here, he had, of course, gradually developed in mind and character very greatly; but he had also, by the strenuousness of his athletic training, brought his body to perfection. Physically he would have been dubbed by his schoolfellows "a fine specimen." And so he was. He was of large frame, though loose knit. He stood now a little under six foot

in height, and held his head high and somewhat back as he passed along at a slinging walk. In a sense he was certainly good-looking; but it was his whole carriage, apart from his fine features, his ruddy, sun-tanned complexion, fair hair and laughing, grey eyes, that captivated us—masters and boys alike.

Our Tutor just hit it off, I think, in a letter to me afterwards—long afterwards—and which I have kept with a few others:—

“I used sometimes to think of him in my own mind as a kind of Charmides,” he writes. “Even we Masters seemed, in Plato’s phrase, ‘to be enamoured of him.’ But I must give you the whole passage, though no doubt you remember it. Here it is, in Jowett’s words, not mine—‘That grown men like ourselves should have been affected in this way is not surprising, but I observed that there was the same feeling among the boys: all of them, down to the very least child, turned and looked at him as if he had been a statue.’ Isn’t that true, now?—dear fellow that he always was!”

There is never an hour to spare in an Eton summer half. Life runs at full tide. The Fourth of June, the Winchester match, Henley,

Lord's, Bisley are the chief milestones ; and in between them, every furlong is marked by some event—the pageantry of the Boats, the Sculling, the Pulling, Trial Eights, the House Fours, and many another contest on the river ; and in the Playing Fields, the weekly School matches, the strenuous doings of all the Clubs, with the House Cup again to finish up the whole. With the work of the School—that curious collection of snippets and short hours—all these must be carried on as well. There must be no pause. Everything must be fitted in to a nicety, and on all sides it is ordained that there shall be never-ending competition.

Young hearts beat high, and the warm blood of youth rushes up and is full of hope. It is only the ne'er-do-weels that are without aim here. Even the smallest of the company is possessed of some minute ideal when the days are long, just as those who are older have theirs when the margin ahead grows short. To be one of eight ; to be one of eleven, and this in a company of a thousand ! The odds against full success are heavy. But the atmosphere here is full of radiant confidence, and young minds sail in on the top of the tide with the sweet fresh breeze behind them, knowing nothing of haphazard,

and caring less, may be, as to who shall be crowned as king of them all. Let there be a good fight for place and an honourable one, and then the world here shall crown whom it will, if now and again with the same clumsiness and apparent irresponsibility that the world outside too often shows.

There had been nothing haphazard in Ainslie Gore's crowning, and he had certainly not come to his own by chance. A natural aptitude had helped him very largely, and nature had favoured him in many ways; yet it was mainly by his own personality that he had really won the position he now occupied, and stood as one of the half-dozen real leaders in the place. The sense of responsibility was putting finishing touches to his youthful character all through this last half. This was still the growing time; the full flowering would come anon, and how fair that would be, those picked men who stood over us liked among themselves to contemplate.

"He is certainly not afraid of anything or anybody," said one of these last in my hearing, watching him batting steadily in Upper Club in a match against the M.C.C.

"Afraid?—I should just think not! Do you remember the story that went the rounds last football half of how he tackled Rogers, who

was then at his Dame's and in the Eight. He had been told that Rogers wore shin pads, or whatever they are called—just fancy! Well, Gore went up to him and said—'We don't come here to save our shins but to fight for the House, and I'll swear you shan't play for us again if I hear of you wearing things like that in any game in the place.'"

"Ah, but that was nothing to the way in which he took that unfortunate decision of our colleague, Arkwright," returned another Master, sitting in the next chair. "That struck me as grand, for it amounted to hideous provocation. Weren't you there? Well, Gore had set his heart on winning the Cup once more for his Dame's before he left, and they were a long way the best eleven. Someone got in the way, they said, and Arkwright didn't see it, and gave a goal after Leslie had touched the ball with his hands. It was quite wrong, as everybody at that end of the ground agreed: the other side were actually standing still, so sure of it were they. A more mortifying thing could not have happened; and time was called before the position could be retrieved. The others kept kicking it out. But I never saw a finer test of character in my life. Gore never said a word. He bore the test well, and his

eleven followed his example. The fickle goddess had deserted them. *Laudo manentem : si celeres quatit pennas . . .* We all know the stanza."

"Yes," said another—"I remember. But those House matches are always the most exciting sport in the world; the spirit of rivalry runs higher than in any other contest of the year."

"There goes another four!" exclaimed the previous speaker—"and very nearly into Fellows' Pond." There was clapping of hands all round the ground. "I hope he'll do that next week: it will be his last match there. Leaving—yes."

"More's the pity; but he'll go to the top wherever he is," remarked the other. "He's bound to succeed with a character like his."

The following week Ainslie contributed his share at Lord's in winning the match against Harrow, his last hit for his School, a very fine one to square leg, striking the walls of the racket courts. Three weeks later—the day before the half ended—he had the further satisfaction of winning the House Cup for his Dame's, and mainly by his bowling. I believe that gave him as much pleasure as anything.

We walked home that evening, taking our

way through the cloisters, as we had done a thousand times in the past five years. I do not think it struck either of us that it was the last time we should do so. As we crossed School Yard, I remember saying something about this final success for him. He only looked towards me and smiled, saying nothing. But I fancy the remark set his mind running on the past, and that he was tracing back his career.

Only those who have loved Eton know what it is to leave Eton. And if this means that all know because all have love, there are degrees here as elsewhere. For an affectionate, warm-hearted disposition such as Ainslie's, the close of his Eton days was nothing less than a matter of poignant grief. Close intercourse with him had already taught me to divine his thoughts with tolerable accuracy, and being conscious now of what was making him so silent, I ventured some further remark about his career and what he had to look back upon. I do not think he would have allowed anyone else to say as much ; but he took it from me in the way it was meant.

"Don't let's talk more of that," he said, nudging me with his elbow, after his manner, and turning to look up at the great clock in

Lupton's Tower, whose golden figures were catching the last of the sunlight—"don't let's talk of that!" Then he added, half to himself, as we went out on to the open road from under the archway: "In less than twelve hours I shall be nobody."

CHAPTER IV

FATHER AND SON

AINSLIE GORE's education during those five and a half happy years at Eton had not been confined to what books might give, but as with other boys in other schools the world over, had been gathered all the while from many sources. His Eton training had taught him, for instance, what it was to exercise authority among his fellows, and through this he had learnt the meaning of a greater self-control. It had shown him, no less, the pitfalls lying open for all leaders, and at the same time how, by his own individual actions, he might pass these by in safety. Of responsibility, and what that might often entail, he had seen much; and above all, had come to him what honour really meant—the points of conduct that it held up to view; the common path it never failed to show, no matter what the calling in the wider world—the sacrifice that it at any moment might lay claim to. These and many another lesson he had learnt, and the invisible hand of his *alma*

mater here had taken pains to graft each into his heart and soul.

And while he was thus perfecting his equipment, often unconsciously, for eight months out of every twelve, a further education of quite another order was progressing no less strenuously elsewhere. Each was in reality the complement of the other, and each was equally designed to fit him for the place he would ultimately occupy in life. In other words, while Eton was busy turning him out as one of her true sons, his father in his home, with characteristic far-sightedness, was teaching him all the hidden secrets of the land and the wider responsibilities that would some day come for him.

Such things might, as in that other case, be gatherable from books, and only gatherable there; but there were countless others also that no printed book could ever teach. Contact with them from the earliest days, followed always by closer insight as the years ran on, was the only way in which they could become part of a man's own self. The air of the fields, the winds that came out of the heavens, the voices to be heard in the great woods, scarcely audible or altogether inarticulate as they might be, were the sources from which they would

ultimately spring. There were untold mysteries here, some of which no one could hope to fathom altogether; yet at the same time there were others lying within each man's grasp—that the land itself would yield, and the folk living on the land would give up, to those who came with open heart to learn.

I have no doubt whatever in my own mind that the Squire realised all this to the full. He told me as much later on in my life, and moreover I recall many a walk with him and Ainslie when he happened to be engaged upon estate matters, and the pains he took to answer our questions. He would always encourage us to come, wherever he might be going, and seemed to delight in having us with him; and he never sought to improve the occasion for our special benefit.

Sometimes he would impart his information in the form of a joke, and at others ask us what we thought concerning some point that was under discussion between him and his estate steward.

"Now then, you two boys," he would say—"what are we to do about this? Purcell says he must have this big cow-ground divided into three fields for convenience of pasturage; where are the fences to run; and where are the

gates and the watering-places to be? Not quite so easy to say, is it?" Then he would add: "Yes, that would do, or wouldn't do," generally ending up in a way that showed that in his own mind he had grasped the position exactly.

In the first instance, his motive in all this had no doubt been to make an end of some of our boyish doings. They were becoming dangerous, and more than once had nearly brought disaster. But after a while he appeared to grow more and more anxious to put as much practical knowledge in Ainslie's way as was possible, and to teach him the things he ought certainly to know. This only son of his would one day succeed him, and would then have to face difficulties that confronted him now continually himself, and in ways that they had never done before.

The outlook on the land was changing, and there were ample signs that dark days lay ahead for all out here. Prices were falling more and more rapidly; competition grew yearly more acute; and it looked as if the farmer was going to be undercut in every quarter. Even the seasons seemed to be against him, and in the wind and the rain and the rotting crops, sounds were to be

heard to which the countryside had long been strange.

Men of all classes were growing increasingly anxious, and were asking themselves what was coming next. Good gold was sunk in this soil, and the rains were washing it away beyond recovery. There were many here of strength and skill and long experience who went toiling on in the old spirit—was their field of labour to become the playground of forces that they could not comprehend? They might well ask; there was room for some bewilderment in all they saw about them. They were men for the most part of grand heart; but such conditions as these were enough to break the stoutest. Some might stand against the adverse flood for a time, being financially stronger; but there were others, in plenty, who had their all laid out in this very soil, and who, by hook or crook, were just keeping their lips above the water. Were these to go under altogether, as scores were doing elsewhere, and in this very County?

All alike were threatened. The fight had begun some years before; it was evidently to be a stiff one. There were three partners in all that had to be done in these fields. Were they going to stand together, or go

apart? Everything must ultimately depend on that. Some would fall, as in other fights, and their places be no longer known—their very names blotted out; others must obviously be crippled for life, and none could hope to come out quite unscathed.

The war must be fought through, somehow—that was very certain. And these men against whom it was primarily waged were just the class to fight it. In the case of two of the partners out of the three, their whole lives were a fight when viewed from their separate standpoints. The third must come to their aid still further, make even more strenuous sacrifice than hitherto, and help to fight the battle that way. All were agreed on that point. Taken together and regarded impartially this partnership that could not be dissolved, was not, apparently, to be brought to ruin and crushed without an honest struggle. There was fight in these men.

But however this might be, here was stern reality that had to be met. Old systems must go to the wall; old tools that had had their day must be cast on the scrap-heap; brains must work where hands had done the most before; the economist and the scientist must be called in to aid; the State must no longer

ignore the oldest of its industries ; there must be a further general lowering of rent, and relief in other forms ; more capital must somehow be procured. Such were the cries to be heard on all sides at this date.

No one who walked the land, then, is likely to forget those years, or the picture that they left upon the mind. For the rest, there stood out this—not in all quarters, but in many—a lasting example of British stubbornness. There were few signs anywhere of giving in.

Among those out here was one class especially with whom hope was a main factor always. In these fields, under this open sky, was never any certainty—never could be. They had followed a calling that had been bred in them for generations. They were accustomed to chuck their money into the soil and hope to Heaven for a yield. They left their capital to walk over the pastures as stock, or to feed in the folds as sheep, and hoped that with due care on their part, the elements would suffer all those mouths to get their fill. They laid out their money in newest machinery, and hoped by these means to reduce expenditure. And then they looked to the markets, and hoped again for a margin

there, that should leave them and theirs at least a living. They wanted all their hope now. They were attacked on all sides ; but in the majority of instances, the same qualities never seemed to fail them, proving once more the old truth, that hope will stay by a man when he has nothing else.

Just here, on these two adjacent properties, no real tragedies occurred—no auction or selling up, with the turning of the back on what had been the home for years—and perhaps for a good reason. The strain remained, year in year out, perilously near the breaking-point for some ; yet these men never seemed to know when they were beaten. “The next season would put matters right” ; the next season was wet again. “Lost the main of our hay, and very unfort’nate, too ; but keep be plentiful on the lower meadows, and should it come a fairly open winter we shall carry through” ; that winter there was not a reen on the meadows that was not frozen hard. “Got a nice piece of wheat in the furlong—nice length of straw to it and a fine head, if we can get it in” ; there came one August night a storm that left that crop, by morning, as though a steam-roller had been over it. Such were the remarks, and too often the

outcome, in this corner of England. I can but write the things I know.

There was little change as the time went on; and what there was seemed always for the worse, as the seventies' ran out and the eighties' brought no relief whatever. With the price of wheat at fifty shillings—or "standing in the fifties'," as they called it here—there had been a chance; but now it had long left the fifties' for the forties', and in '83 had bid these last a final good-bye. Even the thirties' did not hold for long; and then followed the twenties', with scarcely a break for years. Barley and oats told a no better tale, till at length it became well-nigh impossible to cultivate the ground and make a profit.

High farming, some said, might do better; but where was high farming when it touched these clays; and where was the money? The cry became general for cheaper methods. The land should go down to grass, and the plough should be left to rust behind the barn or under the hedge, its day being, seemingly, for the most part done. The labour bill must be reduced, and rents still further; there must be relief in rates. There was no living like this! In some cases these men were growing angry; in others bitter. But still, until ruin, out and

out, stared them in the face, and credit at last became exhausted, grumble, and grumble loudly as many did, the vast majority went doggedly on—and always without losing hope.

Such a picture is not easily forgotten. There is, in truth, good reason for remembering it, and first because, in other form, it is still before the eyes. The Gores of Denton, like many another family, were dependent upon the land for the greater part of their income. The estate, with those wide stretches down by the Severn, the marsh lands, and the great woods that reached up the hills behind the park, comprised altogether over 5000 acres, some of the land being very good and very little of it poor. Much of the pasturage was fairly rich, and if some of the ploughing was stiff soil, it suited wheat well, and on the lighter lands grew some useful roots, while there was no want of good orcharding on any of the holdings. If a man could farm at a profit anywhere, he could do so here, more especially when the lowness of the rents was considered. And when bad times came he knew, moreover, where to look for some relief.

“‘Ther’ bain’t an ordinary held o’ market

days—leastways, where I do 'tend myself—wher' that ain't general knowledge," remarked Farmer Drew, when this last point was referred to at the table of "The Top Boot" one Saturday. He had farmed under the Gores, as he termed it, all his life, and his father before him; and what was more, he had a stalwart son who looked to follow him, "when the time did come for him to put his spoon in the wall hisself."¹ He was one of the old-fashioned sort; wore box-cloth leggings with brass buttons, and his hair was white and somewhat long beneath his broad-brimmed, black felt hat.

"And that be just wher' it do come in," he continued. "They be gentlemen, every smite of 'em, and been so always. You'll never see a Gore profit by another's downfall: he'd a long sight sooner be loser hisself. There be the custom of the County, as we all do know; but, our way, ther' be, further, the custom of the estate, and that don't never change a lot wi' us. Ther' be only one thing as you've got to minds—go honest, and yer safe to be treated fair; try it on, and you be done. And I do most cheerful maintain, that on our Squire's estate, a man as farms as un should—ah, and

¹ To die.

in the times as have come about us now—can go on farmin,' and get the lend of a helpin' hand—ay, and not be chucked out, like a so much must-cake, when every drop have been wrung through the hairs."¹

Farmer Drew sat at the head of the board and was looked up to; and as he talked, tabbering his knuckles on the table, the company in his neighbourhood silently assented, nodding their heads at the close of the old man's remarks.

"Bringing his son up in the way he should go, bain't he?" asked a farmer from a neighbouring estate. "Pity as more doesn't do it. Times be nashun bad, and if the young folks of their class don't scawt about and larn as they should, wher' be we goin' to be?"

"That's right enough," returned Farmer Drew; "and that be just what our Squire be doin'. I've eyed 'em a good bit of late, on my place and about. Seems to be always together, these days. And the lad's a-shapin' remarkable well, I can tell ye."

"And can't he ride, too, and handle a gun nice?" put in another. "I see'd un out

¹ "Must," or "mast," is the apple-cake after the crushed fruit from the cider mill has been wrung through cloths made of horsehair.

t'other day with his Lordship, a-goin' like smoke, and as straight as you like. Take summut to stop he when he come to be a bit older, I reckons. Wonderful steady lad, they says, and pleasant ways wi' un."

"That's so," returned Drew again—"feature his father remarkable, he do; and I ain't no chancer¹ when I says as our Squire means to do all as is in his power to interest un in things as he'll be handlin' when un's turn comes. Nothin' dilladerry about our Squire, I can tell ye; and if this here lad, Mr. Ainslie, goes for a bit o' soldiering, as they says he be, he'll do no more than hisn's father a-done, and his gran'-father a-done afore he, for that matter. It never served either o' they any harm, so far as I can hear say; and like enough he'll come back all the better for it. Does all folks good to see a bit o' life, afore they comes to settle down."

Farmer Drew's remarks were only those to be heard at any time at Denton. The people of the Manor had rejoiced at this boy's birth, and watched him as he grew. They were watching him still, and even closer than they had done before, now that he was growing tall and filling out. Many had already heard of

¹ A teller of untruths, or one given to exaggerate.

the mark he was making at his school, and were proud of it, especially when they could read his name "on the paper"; or were told "as he'd been playin' in a girt match in Lunnun's town, wi' a sight of folks a-lookin' on, so as they was black as flies upon the turf; and set round in thousands upon thousands, they did," according to Susan Mantel's version of the matter.

Among the young men and the boys, such doings gave him a place at once, and when he came home for the summer holidays and attended church, many were watching for him to enter with the rest of the choir, as was his custom. He had always sung in the choir, from the time he could read the Psalms, and continued to do so now. He attended the practices regularly at the village school; and often when the evening service on Sundays was over, would take the organist's place and play the concluding voluntary, while the church slowly emptied and Josiah the sexton put the candles out, one by one, and always with his finger and thumb.

The instrument was a beautiful one, and Ainslie would throw his whole self into what he was playing, either by heart or out of his head, till he seemed to lose all count of time,

and Dick Bond, the blower, "reckoned as the young Squire was ther' to make game on un."

On such occasions, this worthy would come out of the organ chamber when silence had at length fallen on the church, making much parade of mopping his face with a large red handkerchief. Ainslie would take stock of him and smile, saying: "Blown, Dick? Well, come and blow for me to-morrow and we'll make it right."

To which Dick, one of the Manor gardeners, who lived rent free through filling this office, would reply: "Well, ther'; you do give it un smartish, to be sure! For my part, 'wever, I do favour our Mr. Tracker; he bain't so des'pert random." Dick was a privileged person, and had blown the organ for forty years.

But it was among the members of the cricket club that Ainslie was looked upon as a real king. Twice a week he was down there in the evening to coach the players at the net, going without his dinner and taking as much pains with the boys as the professionals did with him at Eton. Often, too, before a match, he might be seen trimming up the ground with a machine, or pulling the roller for the greater

part of the morning. "There is nothing on this earth so funny as village cricket," he would say—"I simply love it."

Of course the club was very proud of their captain, and took care to tell those who came to play against them what they might expect. "But see here," Bill Terrett, the second captain, would remark—"he bain't one to take unfair advantage o' we. Like enough he'll pertend as he's watty-handed¹ for the day, or put hissself in wi' the tail. But see here again—yer'll never bowl un out when he minds to be once in—can't do it myself, wi'out it be now and again upon times." Bill bowled underhand at an amazing pace, delivering the ball when both his feet were off the ground.

"And like enough, you'll see un lift the barl right aboove the trees, yonder," added another—"and then anyun's got to foot it as be in wi' un. He won't have no bounds here. 'Let's run 'em arl out,' he says; 'ther' be more sport in it.' And then away goes a slog for six, and he do call—'Hern Bill—hern!' same as it wus last Sat'day, till Bill, ther', did pitch down right head foremost, poor wratch!"

It was considered advisable to inspire the other side with fear, so far as might be possible

¹ Left-handed.

at Denton ; or as Sam Cook, a shepherd of comical appearance and possessed of one eye, would remark with a grin, before the play began—" 'Twas but only right and fair to give 'em an item of what they wus to see, arter a start wer' made."

Nor was it very different when the long winter evenings came. There must be concerts, and what these people liked best of all—"summut of actin'." And when nothing of this sort was going on, Ainslie turned the school into a kind of working-men's club, where there were newspapers, a bagatelle board, and other games to be played, with a bright wood fire on the hearth, and he himself there—often enough after a long and wet day with the hounds—to give all comers a welcome.

In what he did in these various directions, he acted on the principle that as many as possible should join in and take their part. If a boy developed a good voice, he saw to it that he joined the choir ; if man or boy had a taste for cricket or football, let him join the clubs ; and let those who could find the time, come and look on and mix with the rest. "Never mind the feeling of shyness : come forward and sing a song and lend a hand in this village entertainment, and make the evening happier,

and yourself at the same time." That was what he preached.

"What we have got to do," he said to me once, "is to break down the stupid ideas that are coming in, that for Mrs. Brown to be over friendly with her neighbour Mrs. Jones, is for Mrs. Brown to imperil her position. There is only one way to do it, and that is to get folk to mix together by every possible means. We were never meant to stand apart from one another, no matter who we are—with this class thinking themselves ever so much better than that, and being quite nervous of even rubbing elbows. Was there ever such snobbishness, when you come to think of it? No man need ever lose a fraction of his position by anything of the kind, unless he is a born fool. What we have to do is to get to know each other better, and we can only do that by seeing more of each other."

He certainly practised what he preached. He was welcomed by the poorest family in the place, and felt at home among them. He could go and sit in the parlour of his father's largest tenant, and be no less at home with him and the members of his family. He could go out in the fields, and the men would receive him there with a smile, knowing well that he could

follow their calling and talk their tongue, young though he was. He was not yet nineteen and still at Eton ; but he was already possessed of tact and judgment in a marked degree, as well as a certain quiet dignity of manner that was no less friendly because it never invited familiarity.

He did not minimise the difficulties he met with in carrying out his various schemes for the happiness and welfare of the place. He knew that such must be, and constantly went to the Squire for advice.

"Making mistakes, are you?"—this last would say with a laugh—" Well ; who doesn't that has ever tried to do anything worth doing, I should like to know? And if they say they haven't in their time, let them come out here and try it. What you have got to remember is that, to start with, you know nothing whatever about the inner lives of any of these people ; and that if you, placed as you are, live to be a hundred, you will die knowing precious little then ! Making mistakes?—of course you are. You think you have offended Smith, and you are quite sure you have rubbed Tom's nose unwittingly across his face. So much the better. You won't do it again, and Tom and Smith will make it up.

" The more mistakes you make in learning

the language here, the better for you. There is not one man in a hundred can go out into the fields and talk to those he meets there, without putting his foot in it and making an idiot of himself to a certainty. I've done it a thousand times ; and come away, after showing my own ignorance, feeling precious foolish, I can tell you. And what you have to do, my dear boy, is to do the same. You'll learn it all in time, right enough : I am not afraid of that!" The Squire took a long draw at his pipe and chuckled to himself. He and Ainslie were sitting together for half an hour before going to bed, according to their invariable custom.

The talk between them on these occasions often ranged over a variety of subjects ; and the Squire being one of those who appear to be constitutionally unable to take anything greatly to heart or very seriously, and certainly not at eleven o'clock at night, father and son could often be heard laughing together over their reminiscences.

Living as close as I did, it was seldom that I stayed at Denton when there was a large house party. My parents would dine there and also my sister and myself ; or I might be asked to fill a place when an extra gun was wanted now

and then. Otherwise my visits were generally confined to periods when father and mother and son were there alone, and I thus came in for many of those talks to which I have referred, apart from what Ainslie sometimes told me of them.

A mutual trust and confidence existed between the Squire and Ainslie that was delightful to witness. To me, they often appeared to be something more than father and son, their intercourse being more that of two close, personal friends who hid nothing from each other, reserved though they both were in their several ways and differing greatly as they did in temperament. Of the two, Ainslie perhaps possessed the better brains, as he certainly also found some of his pleasures in directions that to his father were strange. But the Squire, while above the average in general capacity, possessed what was no less valuable to him in his position—a shrewd common sense that was the outcome of a long experience and the sterling qualities that were his by birth.

It would have been difficult to say which had the greater affection for the other; and if their love differed in kind, as it naturally would, it was never questioned because so perfectly understood between the two. On the Squire's

free days at home, and when Ainslie was there for his holidays, they were more and more together on the estate in these difficult years—discussing the new buildings necessitated by the times, the repairs and alterations to cottages, and all the hundred and one details that are for ever wanting attention on the land. Few things had ever escaped this Squire, and nothing did so now. He was here and there on his estate as occasion required, ready always with a helping hand and a quiet word of encouragement; and with him, when at home, was always his son.

They seemed to have become inseparable. It was not only on the farm lands, or the land the Squire kept in hand himself, that they were often to be seen; it was no uncommon thing for them to be out in the woods together as the seasons came round, arranging for new planting in company with the steward, or visiting this or that quarter that was due for its yield of timber or coppice wood, and when the Squire, armed with a pot of white paint, never failed to give his son a lesson in tree-marking—which to spare and which to take, and the reasons for doing both. They liked, too, in their strolls together to watch this or that act of husbandry—hedging and ditching, thatching

and the work of the latest machine—just as they were to be seen with the keepers and a friend or two, walking the stubbles and the roots when September came, or disappearing down the village lane on a wet and misty morning for a meet of the hounds in the vale.

And always on their return, from walk or shoot or hunt, it was their common practice to seek out that other one who made up the home—the lady with the beautiful face, as I came to think of her—Ainslie's mother; tell her what they had been doing and ask her what she thought, either sitting together in the garden in the last of the sunlight, or in front of the wide hearth and the wood fire in the great library, when winter winds were whistling outside, and the long night had shut down on the world.

“What we have got to do,” said the Squire once, when I was returning with him and Ainslie from a visit to an outlying part of the estate—“what we have got to do is to stand by the farmers. I know things are going from bad to worse on the one side, and that outlay is increasing on the other. More and more land is going down to grass every year, and that often means that I have got to pay for the

seed. And a pretty figure it comes to, draining, pit digging and all. Then they find they have no straw for thatching, or can't spare the little they have, the price being 70s. a ton now. So each one must have a French barn. I will show you the bills for these things this evening, Ainslie, on Bettle's farm alone—barn £147—the finest in the County; grass seed £116; draining further bank field £83. Might just as well buy the land over again!" The Squire seemed amused at the idea.

"But it is getting almost too much of a joke, though, isn't it?" he continued—"especially when our low rents have had to bear fifteen and twenty per cent. rebates for years, and with twenty-five, for certain, this year. Can't be helped—can't be helped! Must fight it out together somehow. There must come a change, if we can only live to see it." Then, as though wishing to leave the subject, he took Ainslie by the arm, saying—"Come along; let's go and look at the horses. May as well do so as long as we have any; seems as if the stables were going to be clean emptied before long, with you and I running with the hounds!" And once again the squire broke into a laugh.

Economies were being practised at Denton in many directions, and matters looked into in

ways that they had never been before. "People always begin with their gardeners, when they want to economise," remarked the Squire one evening, when we were sitting together. "Seems to me fairer to begin with the horses. Very hard to throw these poor fellows out of work; besides, the gardens give no end of pleasure to the village folk in summer time, when they are open to them on Sundays. Next season I have made up my mind to come down to one horse I can hunt, with a pair for your mother's driving work. Welfare won't like it much! It isn't as if it was going to be for ever, though. Times have been bad before, and they'll improve again. It's all nonsense thinking otherwise."

"I shan't want a horse at all next season," said Ainslie—"You see, if I leave at the end of the summer half, I must go and work and get ready for my exam."

"Nonsense, my dear boy," returned the Squire—"nonsense! Part with Alice Grey?—never! Why, she cut out the work for the lot of us last Tuesday, and carried you well. To me it was a pretty sight. Might as well ask me to part with Dan, there." Hearing his name the dog got up, and went first to one and then to the other, and then lay down again

with a sigh. "He's part of the family; and so is the mare in a way. She has carried you for five years now. Sell her?—not I! Grass, perhaps, in a year or two, and take it easy for the rest of her days. Can't take money for a favourite—much less shoot my old friends when I've done with them. Ah!—Alice Grey: whatever happens, she will never die in debt, as they say of a good horse at plough."

"No," said Ainslie—"that she certainly will never do." He was leaning forward and stroking Dan, who had curled himself up in front of the fire. "Nor this one," he added. Then he asked—"With us, I suppose, it is generally our own fault if we do, isn't it?"

"Generally, perhaps; not always," returned the Squire. "A good many things may bring it on a man; but I always think the hardest case is where it is shot on to him by his predecessors. Just look at the Oakleys of Stockwell. His father was reckoned a shrewd man; but when he died, it was found that he had settled ever so many annuities on the property, with the result that the present man, John Oakley, has a job to keep his head above water. People may say what they like about his father being only able to judge of things as he found them, and that it was impossible for

him to have foreseen what we are in for now. I don't quite agree. He had lived long enough on the land to know that there is never any certainty here, in our climate. For owners, no prizes and continual outgoings, letting alone increasing taxation ; and for the farmers, falling markets and such things as bad seasons. The very uncertainty of it all should have been a warning to him, it seems to me. Never put a penny on the property, my dear boy—never! You don't want to have a millstone slung round your neck, and you have no right to leave one for the necks of other people. No property out here can stand such things in these days. And the worst of it is that others often feel the weight who are in no way responsible.

“Look at the Oakleys again. John is one of the best-hearted fellows in the County. He is sticking it out as well as he can, poor chap ; but with all the will in the world, he can't help his tenants, and they are going under. He simply lives to fight debt—debt, too, that he never created : that's what he does. So much of his land lies wet, you see, especially on his meadows by the river. I don't expect you know them, though you must have crossed them out hunting without being aware of it.

Yes—over towards Bullpits, before you come to the Horseshoe bend: near there. Well, any rise in the river, and those meadows are waterlogged, and then the tide does the rest.”

“The last season must have been a bad one for them, I should think,” said Ainslie.

“Awful,” returned the Squire—“One of the wettest years we have known for a long while. Just look at ourselves. The hay lay out till it was black and rotten, and I know that ever so many acres of it were carted up here to be used as thatching for the woodstacks. Some of it was not off the ground till after you went back in September, and some was still lying out in October. That was what we had here, and a dead loss; but farther up, when the rains began and the river rose, the men up that way were not troubled much with the carting; the tide did it for them, and away went the lot to sea.”

The Squire could not refrain from a low laugh to himself even at that. It was his way of taking things. He did not laugh because he was without feeling and sympathy. No man ever had warmer heart. Nor was there anything of the empty laugh denoting the vacant mind in this habit of his. There was nothing of vacancy or nervousness about this

Squire. He had a supreme horror of the man who whined, that was all; and the sight of an individual given to self-pity was the one thing that ever made him really angry.

"For goodness sake, you two boys," he would say—"never whine and never cry out. Drop it: it shows want of fight and is contemptible!" He certainly acted up to the standard himself, and when the outlook for him and others grew worse—when further economies had to be practised, and the open hospitality at Denton had to be almost entirely given up—he retained all his joviality, and took in good heart the troubles and losses that had emptied his stables and closed the greater part of his house.

"I believe my father would continue to accept things, outwardly, in the way he does," said Ainslie to me once—"if he and my mother were reduced to one room, and every tenant gave notice. But I know the other side, and how he feels it; and I begin to wonder whether I ought to go into the Army at all; whether my place is not here, fighting to keep the home together as he is doing, and helping him all I know. Denton comes first and before life itself with me; in fact the rest, no matter what it may be, is nowhere.

And then, of late, a horrible idea has come into my mind that he and my mother are pinching themselves in my interests eventually. He talks of doing away with the one horse he has left for his hunting, and keeping one other and a pony for my mother to get about with. We used to have ten. Between them, too, they have dismantled part of the rooms and shut up half the place, as well as reduced the establishment, though outside, and in County matters, they go on working harder than ever. And the worst part of the business is that they are growing old and are doing without things they have been accustomed to all their lives. In fact, I believe the changes up here are greater than in any farm-house on the place. What do you think I ought to do?"

"Stick to your guns," broke in a cheery, well-known voice from the doorway—"I don't know what you two boys were talking about; but I couldn't help hearing the last question, and my answer to that is—when in doubt, do that!"

It happened that one day, shortly after this, the Squire and I were alone together. Ainslie had been due to stay with us for the inside of the week, being now almost as much with us as I had been hitherto at Denton. But

on the very day we had expected him he sent a note to say he must give up the visit. "Please tell your sister how sorry I am," he had added at the end. The remark made me smile. I don't think he would have written that unless he had been very hurried.

The Squire was coming out of the front door, when I rode over two days later. "Just the boy I wanted to see," he exclaimed—"Dear me—I'm afraid there is no one handy to take your horse round for you. Take him round yourself, like a good fellow. You'll find old Welfare there. Ainslie has ridden his mare over to Stockwell. I'll tell you all about it in a minute: you'll find me in my room."

"Come along in, and sit yourself down," he said, when I entered. It was almost impossible for a face like his to look grave; but on this occasion his expression was certainly graver than I had ever seen it. "I am sorry to say Ainslie has dropped into rather a sad affair over at Oakley's. I wouldn't have had it happen for worlds. What his mother and I always say we have to do is to make his life as bright as we can. The days are depressing enough for all of us; but they must not be made so for boys of your age, where we can help it. I know Ainslie's mind is always

dwelling on such things, and in his imaginative way he thinks that Denton—which he loves better than his life, thank heaven!—is going to come clattering down with a run, with family bankruptcy to follow. We are not nearly done yet, though, and are good for a considerable number more rounds! But what we have got to do”—and the Squire dropped his voice—“is to think, first, of the dear boy himself—must think of him at our age, of course, and bolster him up for what he will have to face, when the time arrives for him to stand here alone.

“Just fancy—the other day he even hinted at not going into the Army, and doubted if he ought. Such nonsense! Why, all Gores, or nearly all of them, have always been soldiers; and after ten or twelve years’ service, he will make all the better squire, depend upon it. There are few finer schools than a good regiment.

“Well, but I was going to tell you. It happened on the night before last. He has not told me a lot about it himself, and it is just as well he shouldn’t talk of it. The truth is, I have seen very little of him, for he was away early yesterday, and went off in the same way to-day: he had to give evidence this morning. However, I happened to meet Jim, Nat Organ’s brother, yesterday evening. He

lives over that way, you know, and he told me all about it. It was a horrible affair; but Ainslie came out of it splendidly. I knew he would, if it came to a pinch at any time. His pluck is first class; and at his age, when he might be expected to lose his head, he just gets as cool as you like."

"He never loses his head at Eton," I put in—"and we always say there, that the worse things are, the more he's to the fore."

"I can quite believe that. But I must tell you," continued the Squire. "On Friday the hounds met at Stowell Crossroads, and had a very poor day, till the scent improved with a change of wind in the afternoon. They found in Ackerman's Holt, and ran from there to Hinksham woods. There they must have changed, for they were out as soon as in, and had a splendid five-mile point, right away to the turn of the Horseshoe on Oakley's property at Stockwell Court. Ainslie saw the whole of it on the grey—trust him—and he told me that it was just four o'clock when, in the end, they marked the fox to the ground. He had eleven miles to go in the dark, to get home from there, with a cold rain falling and a fog creeping up all over those meadows, so he gruelled his horse at Oakley's before starting.

"I dare say you know things have been going badly in that part, and that John Oakley is put to it to carry on. Bad job for him, and his tenants too. Ever so many are all behind with their rents, and two more farms have recently been thrown on his hands. He has done his level best and can't do more, and the farmers know it. And they all know this, too, that in these days it is no use trying to farm under a poor landlord. They want his capital.

"Well, this is what I gathered from Jim Organ, and I give it you pretty well in his own words. It was a wet, dark night and foggy, as I say; and it seems that when Ainslie was jogging down one of those lanes, that he suddenly heard the sound of a shot in a dilapidated barn close to the road; and at the same time someone coming towards him at a run. It was the local shepherd, who called out—

"'Hulloa, Mister! Don't know whom you be; but come on, there's trouble agate here. I knows as sure as eggs is eggs what's come about—that's the maister, and he've done it at last, spite of arl my watchin'. Been wrong in his yod; or goin' so, 'wever. The times have upset un; but come you on, and lend a hand, whoever you meut be.'

"Ainslie, it seems," added the Squire at this

point, "was off his horse in a moment, and throwing the bridle over a gate post, followed the man at once. There is no reason to go into details; but they found the poor fellow in the barn, dead as a nail. Of course the shot had brought others to the spot, and one ran up to the house to break what had happened to the wife. But I must continue the story as Jim Organ told it me.

" 'She did turn wonderful comical¹ for a bit,' he said, in the usual quaint way of his kind. 'She'd been half dunny afore, wi' arl the trouble as had come about. The man wus broke. Kept a-fighting on, yer know. Pinned hisn's faith to the hay, like; and when that wer' car'd away by flood water, 't wer' arl over wi' un. Turned strange, he did; and the shepherd ther', what found un, did warn the missus how it 'ould be. And kep' watch over un, he had, hisself, same as if er'd been one of un's own yeo. Says he been a wonderfu' good maister to he, strugglin' man though er had come to be of late. Ther' wus' them as threatened to sell un up; and that broke un —'twus the last straw, for he wer' honest and hardworkin', and wi' a fam'ly of sex at home.

" 'Us never knew'd, just then, who 'twus as

¹ Light-headed.

broughted the body in wi' shepherd—a thing as they shouldn't a-done, seemin'ly. Arl as us could see wus as he wore a red coat and white breech, and as un had been wi' th' ounds, and as un wus quite young. O' course I knows right enough now ; but un's shot up a lot, wi' a fine frame and look to un, since I a-seen un last.

“ ‘ And then us wus all in a caddle, yer see, wi' the wailin', and wi' nought but the light of a couple o' candles, and wi' a cold wet mizzle a-fallin' through the fog. The childern was packed off, and ther' wus only the por ooman herself, left along o' the lot of us, inside and outside door.

“ ‘ She stood ther', wi' the corner of her kerchief tigh between her teeth, and her eyen arl of a zwim. She wer' growin' quieter, yer see ; and presently she got her tongue, and cries out quite loud—“ Can't no un say a bit of a prayer ? ” she says.

“ ‘ Then the youngster, as wus among us, just says—“ Kneel down,” he did ; and we did all obey un, inside and outside th' entrance door, for, seemin'ly, he did take charge o' the whole lot on us as wus ther'—same as if he'd been parson hisself.

“ ‘ And what 'er did say wer' summut arter

this manner, for I reckons I've hear'd it up at Church, times. It wer' this—as the merciful One 'ould look upon our 'firmities, and for the glory o' Hisn's name turn from all o' we, arl them evils as we deserved, and 'ould grant that in arl our'n troubles we meut put our whole trust and confidence in Hisn's mercy, and serve Un evermore in holiness and pureness o' livin'. Then un did start "Our Fadyr that art in Heaven, halloed be Thy Name"; and some on us did join in, and some on us lacked courage, and turned off, like. And then ther' wus quiet; and Mrs. Hunlo did run in, out o' breath, and took the widow away upstairs, she did, and bided wi' her for the night.

" 'The youngster just looks up, arter that, and says as it weren't no use us a-bidin' ther' no longer. So someun brought un hisn's hat, and another un hisn's horse, as he'd been a-walkin' up and down to kep the chill out of un. And just then he turns towards the light, and says quite low, like a real gen'leman—" Good-night to you all."

" 'I sees who 'twus then, in a jiffy. I knew'd un. He wus off arter that to see Squire Oakley up at the Court; and I says to them as wus round—" I knows who the young hunter

be, right enough. Why, that be Squire Gore's son, o' Denton Manor."

"And shepherd he turns round, and says—" Hunter, or no hunter, he taken charge o' we, mysterus fashion enough; and I reckons he be fit for parson, from what I can judge." And at that, I just answers un, and says—"He do feature his mother, that way, wi'out a doubt, for I've allus hear'd tell as she be saint."

"Well, that is what happened," resumed the Squire; "and what I would not have had happen to Ainslie, for all the world. He did not get back here till after midnight, and was off again the next morning, to see if he could do anything to help; and to-day, to give his evidence before the Coroner."

The Squire's story was ended, and he rose from his chair and walked towards the window. In the silence that followed for a few minutes, my mind naturally turned to Ainslie, and the ordeal that such an experience must have meant to a nature like his. But when we met, two days later, all he said was—"I would rather have told you myself, though I don't care to speak of it again. For the widow the position is terrible; but just think of the agony of mind of that man before he came to do such a thing as that."

Of course, after the manner of villagers, who learn things by means concerning which the rest of us know nothing, the whole story was soon all over Denton, and more especially the part that Ainslie had played. By the morbid-minded—and these numbered many—the fact that he had been mixed up in such a thing of horror was regarded as giving him additional importance. By the young men and boys he was worshipped more than ever, and from a healthy standpoint. But down at the little shop, standing with bare, folded arms behind her narrow counter, and drawing in her breath as she spoke, Susan Mantel summed it up this way—"Staunch—staunch; same as Gores have allus been—same as he'll be, whether his life be long or short—you mark me!"

Ainslie was given his first commission in the spring of the following year, being gazetted to his County Militia while still at Eton. His father wished him to enter the Regular Service in this way, and for what appeared to him to be good reasons.

"Of course," he said, "Ainslie can pass any examination he likes, and probably come out high on the list; but what I want him to do is

to mix with the young fellows of his own County, and for the older lot to get to know him. The regiment is a very good one, and there is scarcely an officer who does not hail from one or the other of the families round about. That is as it should be ; and moreover the commissioned ranks are a bit full and it has been a job to get him a place."

The Squire's decision meant that we were to see less of each other for a time. It had been decided that I was to enter the Army through Sandhurst, so when once we had left Eton we met comparatively seldom, though we always kept touch by letter.

We had both learnt a little of our drill as Volunteers, and had also studied the Red Book and fathomed the mysteries of the elementary portions of the same. But Ainslie decided later on that it would be well if he attended the School of Instruction at Wellington Barracks. He never did anything by halves, and was as keen about this as he had been about all the games. To perfect himself in drill was to perfect himself for all those duties that he would eventually discharge, and that were surrounded in his mind with a mystical halo of their own.

And here a somewhat amusing incident

occurred, that brought to mind the expression he had used on our last evening together at Eton. Application had been made for him to attend the course at Wellington Barracks ; but through some mistake he had received no instructions up to within two days of the date when the class would open. He therefore went up to London, and the following morning attended at the barracks to make inquiry.

On the parade at the moment, a battalion of the Guards was being drilled by their Sergeant-major, and looking on was the Colonel commanding the School.

“Oh ; so you want to attend the next class, do you ?” said this last, when Ainslie had an opportunity of going up to him. “Then why the dickens haven’t you brought your orders ? What’s the use of expecting me to know anything about them ? It’s a War Office matter, not mine, and you had better go and find out. We begin to-morrow. What’s your name ? Gore, is it ? Well, I know nothing about it ; and I think you are too late. But stay a minute : do you know anything of your drill ? Oh !—a little. We’ll soon see. Put your umbrella down against the guard-room ; never mind about a rifle ; and fall in in the leading

company of this battalion: we will soon see what you know."

The ordeal was no light one; but in frock-coat and tall hat, and rifle-less, Ainslie, who a few weeks before had been the centre of interest to a crowd of many thousands at Lord's, fell into his place as number three in the front rank, and was drilled for upwards of an hour on Wellington Barracks' square. He came out of it well and was ordered to join the School, and when he told me the story he added—

"I really did feel nobody, then, I can tell you; and moreover I had the fun, when we were standing at ease, of watching a goat slowly nibbling off the tassel on my new umbrella!"

The Squire laughed heartily when told the story. "Capital!" he said to me. "Do you suppose that Colonel —— did not know him? Of course he did: he was an Eton fellow himself, as most of them are there, and was probably at Lord's for the match. Snubbed him handsomely, and then fell him in in the ranks! Well—well; that's where the training comes in and the swagger is taken out of a boy. Not that Ainslie ever had a grain in his whole body: it is only those who can do nothing at all who swagger a lot."

CHAPTER V

ABROAD AND AT HOME

I WISH I had kept more of his letters : those in this bundle seem so very few. The best consolation is that the earlier ones might not have interested many, the letters of our teens being generally hurried productions, written as if under protest, to satisfy the recipients that we are alive and then to be destroyed.

For the most part, Ainslie's no doubt conformed to the general rule ; but I can recall others that contained much of his individual self, being wholly unstudied and with the thoughts of the moment jotted down as they came uppermost. A few of these remain ; the loss of those others I deplore. They would have told so much more of him than I can hope to do, boys like men showing their true selves in their written, even more than in their spoken words, however much they may try, on occasions, to put their very best into both. Truth always springs to the fore and declares itself, here as elsewhere ; and if in this lies a con-

venience to others, there is also in it, occasionally, something of inconvenience to ourselves.

Litera scripta manet.

Ainslie went to Germany for some months shortly after he left Eton, establishing himself at Leipzig, and living there alone during that winter and until the time arrived for him to return for his Militia training in the spring. His object in doing this was primarily to learn the language, but largely also to study music.

"I have been out here for over two months now," he wrote to me at this time, "and live in the funniest house you ever saw, No. 8 Post Strasse. There is no other lodger, or is there room for one, and I am looked after by a homely old Frau and her daughter—also apparently by the police, who have bagged my passport and say I shall have it back if I am a good boy, and come and tell them when I am leaving. I occupy the upper floor. There is a corner for me in my sitting-room, but the rest is taken up by a piano, a stove, and a *shrank* to hold my clothes. I get to my diminutive bedroom from this by a glass door. The ceilings of both are very low. Everything is very low, except the roof, which is high and very steep; and possibly if you were in the street at this moment, and I was to

open one of the two small windows, I could shake hands with you without difficulty. You would not like the street just now, for two feet of snow lies there, and opening the windows is not exactly easy, as they are double, to keep out the cold.

“Of course I am much alone ; but, as you know, that has no terrors for me. I work hard, walk harder, when the snow permits, and do a deal of listening to music. Haussman, of the Conservatorium, is very good to me, and so is Doctor Peschel, to whom I go daily for German lessons. The first is a refined, delicate-looking man who reads Dickens in German, and asks me how to pronounce the names of our friends of the Pickwick Club. The Herr Doctor is a man of vigour and few illusions, and is local correspondent of *The Times*.

“But just think, dear boy—I am only about four hundred yards from the church where the supremely great John Sebastian was organist, and actually go and hear the organ he played on and look up at the seat where he sat! I think he will always loom as large as any man in my eyes, and because of the good he has done to the souls of innumerable men—and must go on doing, for that matter, the most flawless creations in all higher forms of art

being granted, like those souls I speak of, something of immortality. Fancy being able to do that and to acquire that, all of a go! I don't mean, so much, the merely immortal reputation, but the other thing.

"So, you see, what with the links with Bach, the music at the Gewandhaus, the operas at the theatre—entrance, one mark—and walking miles over the great battlefield of 1813, the various points of which I have fairly mastered, I am tolerably well set up. But my English books are few—worse luck! The chief among them is Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, which I hate, but which I have to swallow with a number of others for the English Literature part of my exam. In the German tongue, I try to read Goethe, whom I love, and also Schiller, whom I reverence.

"I wonder what sport you are having at home, and whether you are giving your sister the lead you should, or whether she is leading you as she shouldn't. I was quite right, you see, when I said I should not want a horse this season. But, dear me—how I should like a gallop! Mind you tell me, when you write, how you find my people. Just slip over there, like a good chap, and have a look at them. They both write cheerily; but then you know

they are not to be trusted, where their two dear old selves are concerned.

“Only one thing more; and don’t tell anybody—I like these Germans enormously. And you should just see their troops, their officers especially. The whole thing is so thorough and so professional, and also, where training is concerned, so desperately severe. It is all very well our talking as we do of things ‘made in Germany.’ I only wish we had the secret of the way many things in this country are made, and not by men’s hands alone. Perhaps, however, they wish they had some of our secrets, too—our system of athletics, for instance. I feel sure they do: so it’s ‘honours easy’! Good-bye. A. G.”

I have only two other letters of his belonging to this period, the first being dated in March of the following year, and running thus:—

“The snow has all gone, and things are looking up a bit. One of the big Generals of the place lives opposite, and it appears to be his right to have a regimental band to play to him in the morning, now and again. Peschel doesn’t see much of me then! It is too splendid to miss. There were sixty-three in the band I counted the other day—they belonged to the 109th, a Saxon Rifle Regiment. To listen to

them is to feel that every man among them is really a musician, and plays his best because he loves it, as well as, what is more, because he understands it. I mean, he is not a machine, blowing with all the force of its lungs at a bombardon, and for its own individual glory, but a fellow who is intent on perfecting the general effect to the very utmost of his power, if also at the same time living in some dread of the conductor's spectacles!

"A really good, soldiers' band always gets inside me, and turns me inside out. You should hear these fellows, for instance, playing the *Preislied* in the *Meistersinger*. You know the solemnity of parts of that, and also the sadness—at least, I think you do, and will understand what I mean by this last.

"The best music of the best of such bands has always, to me, this kind of refrain behind it. At the back of even the gaiety, there is something else—the other side—even though the tunes be jigs that make men feel inclined to dance. In the very volume of sound, the full tone, the carefully measured crescendo that ends with the silvery clash of the cymbals, there are strength and beauty, and also something stirring; and thus, such music, by these uniformed men, speaks to me always of that

other side to which I have referred, and that is nothing less than the history that is embodied in a regiment's name—its titles, its marchings over half the globe, the names emblazoned on its consecrated colours, the roll of those who lived their day in its ranks and laid down their lives in its track.

“Just take this one—the 109th. They went to France for the great war of '70-'71. They stood three battalions strong, with, shall we say, something over eighty officers. I know some of the officers of the regiment now, and these have told me that when the regiment returned in the winter of '72, and marched once more through these streets, only four of the officers who went out two years before were present on parade.

“That is the past, and that other side I speak of, and which is embodied, as I say, in this living thing—this regiment, with its gay clothes and gay tunes ; that has its story writ in history, and looks with some steadfastness, amidst the laughter and the cheers, to make its sacrifices yet again in time to come ; to add another page to its records ; to put up yet another monument to its slain. That is what soldiers' bands always bring back to me ; and as I listen I dream dreams of things of which you

and I know nothing yet—of that other side, that you and I will some day know.

“The snow here has all gone, and spring is coming. I picked the first cowslip in the so-called forest yesterday. There is a shallow stream there, but no trout! It is only a big wood, and, as the ground is flat, it is featureless, like the rest of the country round here. But it all seems wonderfully familiar, with its oaks and ash and the golden-green catkins on the hazel, just as they are at home at this moment.

“Nature is always beautiful, even in this uninteresting country, with its miles of undulating, unenclosed land, its straight, strategic roads, and ugly-coloured soil. There is nothing grand, of course, in any of it, if I except space and distance, two conditions that, to me, have always something grand about them, land or sea—immeasurably grand if one looks skywards, night or day.

“But, all the same, it is not the grand that one often wants; and it is not always the grand in which one finds the greatest beauty. It is in the small things and the simple things that I, for one, find what I require most; and beauty, in some form, is what we all look for, sooner or later. Indeed, I go further than that, and say that we were purposely so constituted

as not to be able to live without it. It lies in our roadway at every yard, though we walk blind and may never see it. It is scattered all about our world with an infinitely wise prodigality, that we may meet with it when we most want it, that we may make it our own in the glad days as in those of *Sturm und Drang*.

"But I must stop. You will think me growing too serious, and so I am; and you may think that I have been too much alone, and I have not. What is solitude to one is not so to another, and if I am alone, I have never yet known what it is to be lonely. Still, no doubt, it is long since I had a good laugh, and should like one with you, just as I should like many other things with you. It won't be long now, though, and I don't think I have wasted my time. If there is anyone about you who gives me a thought now and then, give them my remembrance and say I often think of them. Yours ever, A. G."

His last letter to me from Leipzig was written a few days before leaving, and ran thus:—

"I am packing up—that is, not merely putting clothes and boots and books—and—and—and music—into a box, but also saying good-bye to those I have come to know and to like here,

for I still like these Germans and admire them more and more. They are not us, necessarily ; but they are very great ! The police have been duly called upon by me, and seem to think, after looking up the matter, that there is nothing particular against me, and that I may therefore have my passport the day after to-morrow. It is just in these directions that they are so unlike us. There is no real liberty or freedom, it seems to me, and a man may not even put a brass plate on his own door without the leave of these same armed police. It is all militarism and order, swords and uniforms ; everyone salutes everyone else, and even the scavengers take off their hats to one another. It is all right for them, with a possible enemy just across half a dozen borders : but it would not do in our old country, where everyone shoulders along, doing and saying pretty much what he likes, and where stoical, unarmed bobbies smile their good-natured smiles at the crowd.

“I have just been looking at the dates. Are you aware that in little more than a year we may be in touch with the real thing ? First, comes this training in May. Then follows a spell of work—*and* some cricket. In the winter, more work—and perhaps some

hunting. Then the training again; then this exam. . . . and then . . . well; you and I will be launched, with our names in the *Gazette*, and our dies cast. I think you may be a week or two behind me, only however to pass me afterwards.

“If my father manages what he believes he will, there will be no doubt about the regiment for us both. When my father takes a thing up, he generally runs it through. Of course, in working for us, he has his service behind him; but he also has, as they say, ‘such a way with him.’ It is not many who could resist his face, could they?—it’s so good-humoured, so honest and open. You would wager any man with a face like that was true as steel; and if, as I have often thought, there is a certain shyness in his manner, it is the diffidence of a real gentleman, and that pays!

“If I leave here on Tuesday, I shall be in London on Thursday morning, and at Denton the same evening. You should be home by now, so I will come over on the chance of seeing you on Friday afternoon. Will you please tell somebody that I have been paying especial attention to Chopin, and for very good reasons. I can’t play him a bit, and come

the most awful howlers over the *Impromptu*, Op. 29, and a good many more things besides.

"The truth is, dear boy, I came from the company of a lot of mediocrities into the presence of a world of professionals. I was even fool enough to think, once, that I could play a little. I find now that I cannot play at all, so mind neither you nor anybody else asks me—and certainly not in a formal way and on a formal occasion. Our music used to be great fun, when we strummed and sang and lolled about. I should like to go back to that. There is a time-worn adage dealing with such desires; you know it, so I won't quote it.

"I can't write to-day. How could anybody when they are packing up; when the room that has contained them is in disorder, with large gaps in it, due in this case to the absence of my piano that is being at this moment engineered down the narrow staircase by five experts and out into the street? Presently it will be going up the street, like the remains of a departed friend, though, my dear fellow, not with prayers and chants, crosses and candles, but with the echo of *Himmels* and *Wetters* and the strangest imprecations, from the throats of those whose whole lives are

spent in moving heavy pianos up and down impossible stairways, and in and out of all the houses of this exceedingly musical town. See you soon! Good-bye. A. G."

I knew about the time to expect him on that Friday afternoon, and went half a mile through our woods to meet him. He soon appeared, at the other end of a grass ride, sitting slackly in his saddle and whistling a tune to himself. He had not altered a bit in the six months since we last met. There was the same outward cheeriness about him; the same deep tone in his voice, and laugh in his clear, grey eyes.

"How beautiful it all is!" he exclaimed, after an informal greeting between us. "The wild daffers are out in the hedges on our side, and here are all these masses of primroses making their appearance, with the palm at its very best on the black sallies. You can't think how it strikes one, after foreign parts and life in a great big town. The birds were singing this morning soon after five, and that got me up, and I have been out ever since. How is your sister; and how are your people? All well—that's good."

Half an hour later we had had tea, and we three younger ones went off to amuse ourselves. The last half hour of sunlight was flooding the room to which we went through three large windows. At one end there was an exceptionally wide sofa covered with red chintz of bold design, and on this my sister flung herself, while Ainslie finished telling me something about the look of the German soldiers that he had begun as we entered.

The room is just as it was then, and I can see my sister lying back on that sofa now, with her hands folded behind her masses of dark brown hair, and Raeburn's portrait of her grandmother hanging just above her. She was dressed, that day, in some light material of a pale yellow colour that set off her tall, slim figure to perfection; she being then not quite eighteen, and certainly very beautiful.

Presently she got up from the sofa as if something had occurred to her; went quietly across the room, opened a piano at the farther end, and then went as quietly back to her place again. Ainslie half turned his head and smiled, bringing what he was saying to an end.

"I didn't mean to stop you," came a voice from the sofa. "I was only getting things ready. Play us both something—do."

"For heaven's sake, not yet," returned Ainslie. "And if I must—let's all play, and let's all sing, and let's all do just exactly what we used to do. Formality spoils half the music."

"That's quite true," returned my sister; "but why consider it formal? Surely two people in a room can't make it that, or one added to them at a piano make up a formal concert. Besides, isn't this just the time for music? Look, the sun is going down, and it is all peace outside." She had raised herself on the pillows and had dropped her arms on her knees. What a picture she made then!

The appeal and the picture together were too much for Ainslie, and he went across the room and sat down. I do not remember what he played, but it was exactly what was wanted at the moment. He kept the pedal down till sound had died away, and sat as if listening intently. "There is nothing to beat a Broadwood grand like this, after all. This bass is magnificent," he said.

"Sing something," came from the sofa again, the speaker having thrown herself back on the pillows, with her head turned to the nearest window that she might watch the sky.

Ainslie laughed at the request. "I assure you I can neither play nor sing," he said.

"Oh, sing something," I put in, going over towards a corner of the room behind him. "It doesn't matter what it is."

Ainslie smiled and struck a chord or two. Then he began and, after playing a few bars, stopped. "That's the piano part—I can't call it the accompaniment," he said. "Just listen to it. Of course it is part of a complete whole; but to me it is more beautiful than the air or even the words, and I play it often for itself."

"I am not able to judge till I hear them: I will make up my mind when I do," said my sister, softly, a smile crossing her face.

"Will you? Very well—listen, then," said Ainslie, and without adding more began the accompaniment over again. It was Edward Grieg's *Ich liebe Dich*, and the song runs in my head whenever I recall that spring evening.

Du mein Gedanke, du mein Sein und Werden!

Du meines Herzens erste Seligkeit!

Ich liebe dich wie nichts auf dieser Erden,

Ich liebe dich, ich liebe dich, ich liebe dich

In Zeit und Ewigkeit, in Zeit und Ewigkeit.

Ich denke dein, kann stets nur deiner denken,

Nur deinem Glücke ist mein Herz geweiht,

Wie Gott auch mag des Lebens Shicksal lenken,

Ich liebe dich, ich liebe dich, ich liebe dich

In Zeit und Ewigkeit, in Zeit und Ewigkeit.

Once again the pedal was left down, and silence slowly fell upon the room. I turned to look at my sister, and fancied there was a colour in her cheeks that had not been there before. The last of the daylight was waning, and perhaps I could not see plainly.

"Here; I must be going!" exclaimed Ainslie, quite suddenly, jumping up from the piano. "It is getting dark."

"How German you are!" came the voice once again from the sofa.

The Militia training passed off without incident. Ainslie quickly won his way with his brother officers, many of whom had known him before; the seniors nodding their heads to one another and remarking—"He'll do."

Then he returned to Denton for the summer, to work at his various subjects, to help his father and mother in many ways, and to play cricket with his village club.

"Ther'll be doin's now, I can see, plain," remarked Bill Terret. "I could find of it as soon as ever the young Squire come home. Ther's to be a match agin Blifford, come Sat'day; and I've been a-axin' he whether he'd judge it well for I to take to round-arm."

‘No-a, no-a,’ says he—‘you kep on wi’ yer under-hand : you does quite sufficient execution with that as ’tis.’”

“Wull,” returned Sam Cook, the shepherd, “I reckons he be about right ther’, an’ as it ’ould be a’most a pity to make a change till us sees how things goes on.”

I was away at Sandhurst during those months, the only letter of his that I kept being this :—

“Everything much as usual here. My mother always busy over a thousand different things, and working with positively amazing energy at each in turn. Her influence is wonderful, and the village folk appear to worship her more than ever. As to my father—he continues all his County work, and, what with that and the estate, seems never to have a moment till the evening ; and even then he is often writing letters or trying to do accounts, when he ought to be in bed. I think the condition of things on the land tries him ; but ne never lets it out, except sometimes to deplore the changes.

“‘Half the pleasure of country life is gone, or going,’ he said to me last night, ‘and it is all becoming so different to what it was. Not so long ago they wanted me to come forward

as one of these new County Councillors. Of course I said I had no objection, though I didn't believe the County work was going to be better done than it had been. But when they told me I must go round and ask people for their votes, in order to get this precious C.C. honour, I simply said that nothing would induce me to. If people liked to vote for me—very well; but I wasn't going begging to their doors after helping in the work for nearly thirty years. Anyway, they made me a County Alderman in the end, so there was no need of my going round, cap in hand. I hope everybody will be impressed!' Can't you imagine him saying that, and his amusement at the whole thing?

"You know we have given up preserving, and are turning out no pheasants this year. I doubt which is most melancholy—Giles Merrett, when he looks at his coops stored in the sheds, or old Welfare, when he pokes his nose into his empty stalls and boxes. My father also intends to get our third man a place and leave Giles with only one under him. Of course it is all part of the general come-down; but neither the farmers nor the men like it. The first say that the pheasants never did them any real harm; and do less, now that the land round

the coverts is nearly all down to grass. They also declare that, in the keepers, they have staunch supporters in preventing trespass—a matter of some importance with the orcharding everywhere and people, in these days, claiming rights of way where they have no right to be. As for the men on the place, these dislike it even more than the others. Our days in the coverts were holidays for them, with good money added, a good feed, plenty of cider, a trifle to be picked up for carrying cartridges, and what is dearer than anything in their eyes—a rabbit to be taken home at the end of the day. So we are all the poorer, one way and another, and likely to become still more so.

“Trappers are everywhere now, and hares are pretty well exterminated. I think the last is certainly a pity; and it seems to me very poor form, all things considered. But it is no use dwelling on such things. Even you and I can remember when a farmer was glad to leave a bit of hand-reap stubble down the length of a wheat field, and where we could certainly find birds in September. We have come to days now when there is not only no hand reap, but precious little stubble of any kind. What there is, is shaven close to the ground. But what's the use of talking about it; you know it

all just as well as I do, and as my father says—‘It can’t be helped, and we have got to accept it.’ Depend upon it, it is harder for him than for us.

“But here is something brighter than all this. A great event has happened in our family. My father’s youngest brother—my uncle John—was married last year, and he has just had a son born to him, and I am to be godfather! My old father is delighted, and says—‘Ah, John ought to have married long ago, since Robert never has, and never will now. I hope he will have a lot more: Gores, like other things we know of, aren’t half thick enough on the ground—not half!’

“I am getting through a lot of work. My father suggests a tutor: but I can see my way to doing without, so say it is quite unnecessary. Why add to expense, where one can help it? I say—we beat Blifford the other day by an innings and two runs. I went out for four, a beast of a ball hitting me in the forehead and then taking my bails. The ground wants a little attention and I must be at it with a roller; but a really bad ground equalises all players, and that is where the beauty of it comes in—and the fun.

“There was certainly fun in this case. The

scorer, old Jimmy, was puzzled how to enter such a thing as my dismissal. Of course Bill came to his assistance, with—'Bowled horf the heye, o' course; what more could anyun want to zee on scorin' sheet?' Jimmy screwed up his lips over his toothless gums, and still remained in doubt. We got it all right after a bit! Good-bye.—Yours ever, A. G."

There seems to have been little to mark the rest of that year or the earlier part of the next, so far as I can gather from other people, or recollect myself. I can recall many a day's shooting that September, when the Squire and Ainslie and I were out together over the Denton estate, the Squire leaving it to us, now, to do the outside of the beats, and taking short cuts himself. It was not a country suitable for driving, and we always walked the birds, and sometimes took out a brace of pointers.

I believe the Squire enjoyed those days as much as any in the year, especially as he could now no longer face the flats by the Severn, when north-easterly winds brought the snipe and there was a rim of ice along the reens. Such things as wading in the shallows when days were at their shortest—waiting in the chilly dusk for the whistle of a mallard's wing

at cockshut—were not for him; but at the same time he would often give us the most minute directions concerning the best course to follow, if bent upon such things ourselves, taking stock as he spoke of the direction of the wind, and looking up to see whether the sky held rain or snow.

He always contended that true sport was never a soft job, and seemed to think that it would lose all source of enjoyment as well as training if it became so. He had contempt for luxury and every form of self-indulgence, and I remember his saying to Ainslie—"I know, you as my son will never give way to anything of that kind, and that you hate the effeminacy of it as much as I do. But mind both of you always set your face against it—you will grow up all the better men if you do."

We were sitting in a row, at the moment, on a gate that Merrett had unhung and laid in the tussocky grass on the sunny side of a hedge, sharing a bit of bread and meat with the men during the half-hour we gave ourselves in the September days I speak of. The wide vale lay spread out below, with the Forest hills all blue to the west, and the sands of the Severn showing that the tide there was at dead low water. Ainslie was often very silent at such

moments. He seemed to be taking stock of different points in the landscape, chewing a dry bent between his teeth ; occasionally looking up at "the domes of marble" in the high heavens, and no doubt thinking many things.

Alice Grey was still to the fore when that winter came, and with her, and many mounts he was offered, Ainslie saw some of the best days of the season. He had a good eye for country, with beautiful hands on a horse and a picture of a seat, and thus many were glad to get him to ride a young one for them and asked him to dine and sleep at their houses for the purpose. It was so in my father's case, and Ainslie accordingly often spent a night at my home whether I was there or not, all of us being equally fond of him.

Nor was it different elsewhere. He was accepted wherever he went and in whatever company he found himself, and I remember a very prominent personage in our County saying of him once in my hearing—"I can't explain it exactly ; but there is coming about in young Ainslie Gore a kind of irresistible attraction. If he was my son I should feel that his universal popularity would prove to be one of his greatest dangers in life."

All I can say myself is, that if there was a

snare here, Ainslie certainly went scatheless, for he was totally unaware of the fact himself.

The Squire gave up hunting about this time, and talking of it some years later said to me—"I might have come down to the proverbial old gentleman's cob; but you know there was not much fun in that. So I just decided to have done with it altogether, and hung up my crops behind the door. Kept up my subscriptions to the various funds, of course; had to do that for the credit of the place and Ainslie's sake, leaving him to take what change he liked out of it."

There was something inspiring in the way that Squire Gore faced the growing difficulties and all he was trying to do. He had once wanted for nothing: he was now only able to maintain himself at Denton by his income from invested funds. For many a year, in former times, he had known what it was to be pocket-easy—to be able to give away liberally; to fill his house at all seasons; to do this and to do that, without troubling himself about the cost. But the estate was now showing a heavy balance on the wrong side annually, and he was therefore using all his endeavours to curtail expenditure, and also to do what he had

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never done before—to keep private accounts in detail, a task that puzzled him much.

His neighbours in the County watched him with a smile of admiration, guessing also, perhaps, what he and his wife had partly in view in denying themselves as they were doing. Many of the tenants expressed regret, and then turned and looked at their own pockets and their several farms: at the same time they did not like to see a lowering of the standard of living in the case of their landlord; it reflected in a way upon themselves.

The labouring men, for their part, frequently compared notes over their ale, contrasting the present with the past, up at the Manor. The vein of their talk had often something of melancholy in it, and having expressed their feelings and their regard for the Squire and his good lady on such occasions—as they sat, perhaps, and talked in the taproom of the Gore Arms—usually brought their proceedings to an end after a prolonged silence, by placing a considerable share of the blame on the wrong shoulders.

Possibly Susan Mantel put it best into words, a good deal of gossip passing over that narrow counter of hers in the course of a year—"For my part," she said, to her opposite neighbour,

Mrs. Tull—"it do seem as if one class wus going up in spite o' the times, and t'other class wus coming down 'cause o' the times. 'Tis queer; and if I can't seem to get beyond it, somehow, I can yet tell ye this, Mrs. Tull, as Gores ain't soon darnted—no, that them bain't! Neither th' old Squire nor his good lady do give away less than they did used, in parish and about; but Squire be far-sighted, an' his son be jus' everythin' to un. Zeed 'em pass last night, I did; a-goin' by with the young un on the old un's arm, and I says to myself, Mrs. Tull, I says—it be there lies the secret, I says; and time do creep on for us arl."

Mrs. Tull had come across to buy three-pennyworth of dips. She wore a red and black check shawl, and a black cap with a frill to it. Her complexion was sallow and her neck was extraordinarily thin, and she was Susan's senior by some years. One of her thin hands was holding the door-post as Susan talked; but when it came to her turn to put in a word, the baffle in her breath,¹ as they called it here, prevented her saying much, and she contented herself therefore with nodding her head and repeating Susan's last words more

¹ A stammer.

than once, before picking her way homewards across the muddy road—"L-l-lies the secret; an' t-t-time do creep on—ah, well, to be sure."

I cannot do better, I think, than give here a part of one of the Squire's letters to his son, though it belongs to a year or two later than this, when Ainslie was many hundred miles away. The last paragraphs run thus:—

"I can assure you that there is no cause for the least anxiety on your part; and the very last thing either your mother or I would dream of doing would be to cut down your allowance. How like you to think of that! I want you, on the contrary, to live in the way that you should, as heir to this old home of our family—keep a good horse and win the regimental race! I know what Denton is to you, and also what you are to us. The old home will be safe in your hands, and I can feel happy on that score. I am trying my best to keep everything up to such a standard, that when a change comes you can let things lie down for a year or two.

"One point, however, I am quite sure of, and it is this—that if, in trying to tide the tenants over these bad times by every means possible, and doing all that I want to do besides,

we are hit even harder than we are now, nothing will ever make me go out of these doors to let a stranger in. Rents may go down, as they have already done in some cases, from thirty shillings an acre to twelve and sixpence—together insufficient to cover the tithe, land tax, income duty, insurance and repairs—or coppice wood may fall, as it has now done with us, from twelve and fourteen pounds an acre to three—but I mean to stick it out, and so does your mother, if we have to take to one of the attics and live on bread and cheese.

“I don’t say this in any bragging spirit—I hope I am not capable of that kind of form; but that is what I feel. A family property is a trust, for the time being, of the man who holds it, and the duty of people of our class seems to me to be to continue to live among their own folk, in the homes where their forebears have long carried on traditions—still trying to do their best by those about them; fighting out all that comes, and that *will* come, mind you, if I know anything of the times; and without a particle of hesitation, much less fear—if, indeed, I care to use such a word as that last at all. I must stop. I feel sure it will be all right—indeed, my dear boy, I know

it will.—Ever your affectionate old father,
RUPERT GORE.”

There was nothing to mark the next few months. With the spring came the Militia training again for Ainslie, followed by a spell at his books and the examination. A few weeks later the news arrived that he had passed, his name appearing with others in alphabetical order, the examination not being competitive at that date.

That same morning the Squire left for London, saying to Ainslie, with a broad smile on his good-humoured face as he wished him good-bye on the front-door steps—“It won’t do for us to run any risks in a matter of this kind. Of course there are many fine Regiments in our Service; but there can only be one really for me—and you. So I must just go up and see Sir Edward and one or two more, and remind them of their promises. And I shan’t come back till I have squared it for you both. Ah; the Regiment!—you should have seen them move in the old days—seen them move!” Then he was gone; touching up the old horse and playing with the lash of his whip, with Welfare wreathed in smiles on the back seat of the dog-cart behind him.

An official envelope made its appearance not long afterwards and Ainslie found himself gazetted to one of the most distinguished Regiments of the British Army, being subsequently ordered to join the second battalion of the same overseas.

The Squire was jubilant, and there was a quiet delight in the eyes of his wife. The break up that it meant in their small home circle affected them in different ways; but numbers of the family had gone out from these walls on similar errands, and this new recruit was only one more added to a long list: it was all quite natural and as it should be.

CHAPTER VI

SOME SOLDIERING, AND OTHER THINGS

So we both stepped out into the world, and sought in our several ways to become men.

Ainslie of course carried all his ideals with him, like some stock-in-trade upon which he had to maintain himself—so many warm-blooded realities standing at his elbow; not by any means mere fantasies, but to become daily more definite—to be attained, captured, made his very own. And if his aims were high, he sought to make the tools he worked with fit for such purposes, just as he continued ever to believe that all things he was brought into contact with were capable of being made the best of their kind, or at least in some way better than they were.

“I often think,” he said to me once—“that by the beauty given to us so freely on every hand, Nature sets a standard for us who pose as masters here. It is true that this beauty is often hidden from us—that is, in the sense that

it demands search, not to mention many other things besides. But there are two further points to do with it that never fail to appeal to me. The first is that in Nature's world beauty is nearly always progressive—from the seed to the flower and the fruit; and the other, that it increases the closer we come to it and the more we strive to make it our own.

“I believe it to be very much the same with ourselves. Beauty in some form is implanted in every one of us, and we are meant to search for it, to bring it out, to use it and to perfect it. You may call it my philosophy, if you like; but don't forget that all Nature is just the manifestation of one great truth after another. And if that is so, and purpose is inherent in the whole, it seems to me pretty feeble for us men not to realise the fact, instead of being content to sit with folded hands or to trudge along with aimless feet. Depend upon it there must always be continual progress and reform—progress towards a more perfect beauty—the cleansing of what is inherently false and wrong. And hence there comes about this—that behind beauty, in whatever form, there is the beckoning finger; the claim for distinct aim, even though we catch at phantoms and be babies crying for the moon!”—and he broke into a

laugh as if to cover the seriousness he had thrown into his sentences.

Certainly his aims lent immeasurable zest to his life, giving him happiness of a kind not often met with. As the years of manhood opened, enthusiasms appeared to radiate from him more and more. He seemed to find the world a happy place; and in one of his letters I find him writing as to this—

“Life is the finest of all sports, if you come to look at it closer. You have never to travel far for opportunities and you can always hunt them, not forgetting that they have a trick of sometimes hunting you. And if that looks enigmatical, it is not so much of an enigma as it seems. You at least will not think that I forget the serious side. I certainly do not; but I think that reference to it is best kept in the background. By over-emphasis it is apt to get blunted, and may easily turn to something not quite so becoming.

“It is precious difficult, I know, for some of us to call always for the merry tune and to drink deeply of the many wines of life: I often find it so myself. But all the same, keep the merry tune running in the head, and fill the chalice with the richest to be purchased—ay, and slap up to the brim! Neither will ever

mar or stain, and you will find happiness in both—it will come to you from both sides, too, the serious no less than the gay.

“I came across this the other day, when reading the life of Pasteur, and give it you in English—‘Happy the man who carries within himself a God, an ideal of beauty, and who obeys it: the ideal of art, the ideal of science, the ideal of Country, the ideal of Gospel virtues—these are the living springs of great thoughts and great deeds.’

“You and I are not likely to give the world great thoughts or to be guilty of great actions, the capacity to do either being the endowment of the merest fraction of mankind. But that is no reason why we should not possess our little hopes and have our little aims, and be as happy in their possession as the giants we read of, hear of, and very rarely see. We can’t be great. We know that, right enough. Our place is with the rank and file. But because we are insignificant, there seems to me to be all the more reason to begin with ourselves and to furbish up the little talents that we have.”

Ainslie was gazetted to the Regiment about two months before me, and went through the

ordeal of joining it alone. "You know when a single hound is thrown out," he wrote to me, shortly afterwards—"all the pack growl at him as a stranger when he returns, and look as if they'd eat him. Well, joining isn't quite as bad as that, so far as I am able to judge, for the fellows here are naturally rather a picked lot and don't therefore either growl or look as if they'd eat me. Indeed, some go out of their way to give me a hint or two, and help me to find my way about. I can see that I have got it all to learn, and of course this first go off is rather overpowering. For one thing, the last joined are somewhat ignored; and for the first year or more their voices are not reckoned to be heard in the mess-room. 'Seen and not heard' is the rule; and in this seeing on the part of others lies the judging all the time, while in the holding of your tongue we all know there is virtue.

"To become one of a great Regiment seems to me like suddenly becoming a member of a great family, and heir at once to all its traditions. It is a new home, peopled by those you have never seen before, and several among whom are distinguished. To walk in therefore at the front door—labelled, here, *Officers' Mess*—simply, my dear fellow, makes one quake.

But, after all, much depends upon oneself. If you behave as you should, there is nothing to be afraid of; if you are a fool, you will be treated as such and deserve it. A fellow, for instance, joined here last year, and strolling into the Orderly Room where the Colonel had just been dispensing justice, put out his hand, saying—‘How—do, Colonel; think we’ve met before.’ So some of his brother subalterns took him down to the back yard in his night attire that evening, and having pointed out the tap against the wall, ordered him to take his seat there and turn it on. Served him right, I think: too much side! They say he is becoming a first-rate fellow now, though he did not surrender to the first tap.

“Then again, if one is always having one’s measure taken by brother officers, you may depend upon it you are being also pretty closely fitted by the men—perhaps even more closely. Sooner or later, I fancy, you will stand out before them in just the clothes to suit you, and no others. A fellow, here, said to me the other day—‘You can’t be too particular about all you do before the men. Remember, they are always watching you, especially at first; and what is more, they are perpetually comparing notes. The result

is that they come to a decision about you at once, and probably know more about you in three days than you do about yourself.'

"I like that; and though the verdict may be very different to what we believe or think it ought to be, it is certain to be fairly just. We are always too jolly sure of our mental estimate of ourselves. In this case, however, we shall probably find out the truth of the verdict passed upon us, when the supreme hour arrives and there is a check instead of a bound forward. Fail to win these fellows' hearts, and they will fail you, and fail themselves through you—don't forget that: win their hearts and their confidence at the same time, and they will follow you to—well, blazes! The real remedy, I think, is to be a gentleman at all times; and there is no surer judge of a gentleman, especially if he is country-bred, than Tommy, the gentleman, himself."

A long, whitewashed building in the full blaze of a Southern sun, with three interminable rows of windows all set deep in the wall and all alike fitted with green jalousies. To right and left and somewhat to the front, two square blocks of similar design—these being

known as the North and South Pavilions, or Officers' Quarters, and the whole, as The South Barracks. Set right in the centre of the long, main block, and approached by a flight of ten much-worn steps, is the principal entrance, with other similar, though smaller, ones at the extremities of this white, featureless erection that remains much as when the Spaniards set it up and the great fortress of Gibraltar was theirs.

To one side of the main gateway stands a sentry, under the shelter of his "sentry's umbrella," with his beat along the front trodden smooth by unknown feet for untold years, and having the whole wide parade to himself this suffocating August day. No one who can help it is moving anywhere: the pitiless sun is too fierce and the time of day quite wrong. Only those are abroad who have to be, and even they are very few—this corporal of the guard going his rounds with his relief of two men; this Spaniard on his mule, shuffling along in the dust of the broad road skirting the parade—his panniers filled with oranges, tomatoes, bananas, and a green and a yellow melon or two, his face burnt to dark copper, and his eyes screwed up in the glare under his broad-brimmed, black Spanish hat; this scrap of a

boy bugler who comes out on to the flat at the top of the central steps and wakes up the echoes by sounding the quarter for defaulters, and then disappears into the dark, cool shade to repeat his call at the back of this great building.

The echo of the bugle notes are repeated elsewhere and come back from far—"Oh, come to your mother, you poor little beggar; oh, come to your mother, dear boy." One wonders, watching this child, if his notes should carry to England, whether his own mother has a thought for him there. This scrap would scorn such sentiment, and possibly remark, "Not much!" if you asked him.

But meanwhile his music and that of others at this hour find echo here from rocks burnt dry as pumice, and hot, silent cliffs that never cool at this season, rising high into the blue heavens to a height of 1400 feet—right up in some places from the level of an even bluer sea.

Vegetation seems to be practically destroyed, save for the palmettos, the taller palms, the bella sombras and the pepper trees, the giant poinsettia bushes, and the castor oil plants with their shining leaves spread out flat in the everlasting glare. There are no longer any flowers—the hot rocks and the fierce sun alike

have said their "No." Four months ago there were crimson Barbadoean aloes all along the paths at the foot of the slopes, with beds of pelargoniums, the many-coloured hibiscus, white daturas, clambering purple bougainvillæa, irises and arum lilies—even small patches of green grass flecked with yellow stars. But then the heat grew greater daily; the air dried up the scanty soil; and the scorching sun came over the heights above to glare at the face of this great, giant Rock for ten to twelve long hours daily, till at last it went behind the purple hills across the bay and its glassy sea, leaving men and plants alike flagging a little more, waiting as best they might—for months—for the long-delayed coming of the rains.

Ainslie and I were sitting in his quarters in the South Pavilion, his single window looking out towards the great barracks, with the steep slope of the burnt-up Rock behind them—dazzling white walls, grey barren rock, a sky almost sapphire blue, a shade temperature of anything over 95°, and the silence of afternoon broken only by stray bugle calls and the eternal buzzing of flies.

We had been nearly three years on the Rock, with only one spell of leave in the time. In a few months more the Regiment would be

going home, and we had been talking of that and what these years had brought us, till at length Ainslie had fallen asleep in his chair. He had come off guard soon after six that morning, which meant in this instance that he had spent the night in his clothes and the previous twenty-four hours in the ditch of the fortress at the Waterport, finding what comfort he might in a low, arched casemate, chiefly occupied by an obsolete gun, and tenanted at night by an innumerable company of rats.

He was lying back at the moment dressed in a thin pair of white trousers and a white silk shirt, open at the neck and turned up at the sleeves. His legs were crossed, and one arm had dropped, till the hand rested on the cane matting on the floor. His face was no longer that of a boy ; it had become stronger and fuller of character. His frame showed equal change. He had developed greatly. The figure was as loose knit as formerly, but it had become far more powerful, squarer, and with every muscle perfectly attuned.

His appearance had always attracted attention ; few passed him now without looking twice, for with manhood—early manhood though it still was—had come increasing good looks, a certain natural dignity of carriage, and

a charm of manner that was little less than captivating to people of all ages and both sex. Everyone knew him here; all liked him for his simple ways, his geniality and good-humoured readiness on all occasions; and many loved him, where traits of character had been discerned that were shown to very few.

If anyone ever had chance of being spoilt Ainslie Gore had here; but his very naturalness seemed to be a bulwark against anything of the kind, and in this brilliantly happy period of his life he remained the simple-hearted being of many talents, who lived his days in the sunshine, brimful of the joy of life, keen to excel in all he undertook—first, in the case of his profession, and then in all those many interests which he either created for himself or with which he had been naturally endowed.

Such a personality as his was certain to be surrounded by temptations from which more ordinary men are wholly free. He could, for instance, do many things that others could not, and do them very well, and for this reason he was in some quarters courted and made much of, as well as flattered not a little. At first he never noticed it. As soon as he did, he laughed at it all as a joke: the snare had lost its power to harm him then. Had he,

however, been inclined to succumb to the many dangers that waylaid him, there was an all-sufficient antidote in the system existing in his famous Regiment. He had joined with what many might have thought the highest of credentials, as a former member of the Eton Eleven. But when the cricketing season opened here, with the customary match of a regimental team against the next twenty-two, that new-comers might show their form, Ainslie was relegated to the twenty-two, while I, a poor performer, was placed for the nonce in the eleven.

We never got him out that afternoon, on the level stretch of sand and scanty turf lying between the two seas at the North Front, the match being long afterwards referred to by reason of a remark he made. He was not sent in to bat until several wickets had fallen, and was perfectly well aware that he was on his trial. There was a quiet smile on his face when he reached the wicket that reminded me of earlier days, and I felt confident therefore what would come. He just looked round at the field, and then in the same over, hit a six and two fours in three consecutive balls from the best regimental bowler.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said, when he had

run the last out, and as if almost indignant—"but I can't help it, if you *will* keep bowling me half-volleys on my legs!" Point heard it and passed it on to his cover when "Over" was called; and so it went the round of the field and some laughed.

Ainslie naturally always played for the eleven after that, as everyone knew he would from the first. His being placed in the twenty-two had possibly been meant as a reminder that, here, everyone began at the bottom, irrespective of his position elsewhere, and no matter who he was or had been. No doubt we grew in time quietly proud of some of his performances with the bat; but there was rarely any applause or patting on the back amongst us, the view taken being that the individual worked for the credit of the whole, and not for the eleven or the side only, but more especially for the Regiment. The success of the individual thus became, by general consent, merged in the doings of the rest, just as it might, for instance, when the matter in hand would be very different—when honour called for straightest leading, and tradition claimed her final sacrifice.

Sport of all kinds was encouraged amongst us, and in our Colonel at the time we had a

man who was well fitted to lead. He came of a great family ; he had seen much service : and now in these later years of his command had set himself to make his battalion all that it should be, from top to bottom. In this way, and being unmarried, as in fact we all were at this period, it was his custom to have his younger officers much with him, and on Sunday afternoons especially, two or three of us would accompany him in a climb to the highest points of the Rock, or go with him for a long walk elsewhere. On parade he was severe ; but at other times, while there was never any familiarity, he was, out of doors, just one of us, joining the rest in everything. No truer, cleaner-hearted man ever wore uniform, and he made the Regiment, in one sense, what it was—a happy family.

Being a wise man, our Colonel never showed favouritism. He was very quick in forming his opinions. For Ainslie he had a great liking from the first, and also thought highly of him, professionally. Years afterwards, he said to me—"He was a dear good fellow and one of the smartest officers I ever had, and I always hoped to make him my adjutant. He had brains, you see ; and his ultimate success was certain—at least, I always thought so."

When Ainslie first joined and came out to the Rock, the hunting season was in full swing with the Calpe hounds, and having been brought up to such pursuit from childhood, he set to work at once to find a horse. It was a point of honour in the Regiment that all should hunt when not on duty, and as the first and second whips of the pack were two of our number we generally mustered in great force.

The country was strange after the Berkeley vale, whether in the Cork Woods or the Alcadeza Craggs. There was no fencing, and crossing cultivated ground was strictly forbidden. But if much of it was impossible riding, there was always a far better chance of breaking neck and limbs than in any country in England, and ample room for horsemanship and daring in this jolly company of soldiers. Mounted on "General Prim" and properly turned out, as most of us were, in a red coat, Ainslie was rarely absent on the two days a week that hounds were out. He rode quietly and well, in a field that contained many good men, and just before the season closed, was fortunate one day in confirming the opinion that some had formed of him.

It came about in this way. Tropical rain had been falling, and the field had dwindled to

a score, when we found ourselves in a country scarcely rideable for its steep crags and boulder-strewn slopes. Ainslie had learnt something of the science of hunting on the days when he had handled the Eton beagles, and being totally fearless, had on this occasion, and when hounds were running, come down the well-known Devil's Staircase in the Alcadezas, to find himself at the bottom alone with the hounds. For a moment in the valley, they were at fault; but making a cast forward and hitting off the line, Ainslie had already run into his fox when the huntsman—as reckless a rider in this country as might be seen—reached him, with —“Well, well, Sir!—wherever did yer learn that, then?”

Nobody said much to Ainslie at the time, whatever they may have said among themselves. The Master, who hailed from the Bicester country, looked at him, and contented himself for the moment with a grunt of approval; but when the next season opened, Ainslie was charged with the important duties of earth-stopper, an office in a country such as this involving much work on non-hunting days. Of course he threw his whole heart into it, that the sport here might be improved; and so keen was he on many occasions that he was

regarded by some as being almost as good as a terrier in drawing a fox, his hands bearing many scars in consequence.

It was no uncommon sight, when a gallop had ended in a run to ground, and much time had been expended with crowbar, pick and shovel—instruments always brought into the field by his assistant, ex-Gunner Jim—for Ainslie to go half to ground himself, leaving little showing but his boots. And on one occasion, when the tongs were missing from Jim's miscellaneous outfit, I well recollect his being pulled out from a hole, bringing with him, to the amusement of the field, the fox himself gripped tightly by the cheeks.

Ainslie ran his horse that year in the regimental steeplechase, but failed to win a place. He had expected nothing else, "General Prim" having had a hard season and being little better than a bag of bones. But that race must be won, and the possibility of winning it became from this time forward one of the dearest wishes of his heart, no less than the wish of his old father at home.

It was not a question of money and buying the best horse, with somebody else to train it

and yet another to ride, the conditions being that the horse entered should have been regularly hunted by the owner during the previous season, and be ridden in the race either by the owner himself or a brother officer. There were no stakes. The winner had his name engraved on the cup, and the last man in had to stand champagne at dinner to the rest.

That summer Ainslie took short leave more than once, and visited Tangier, trying horses there with me on the sands at three o'clock in the morning on one occasion, though without purchasing. Then he went to Seville, and finally finding what he wanted at Jerez, christened his new mount "Jerezano." The new horse was no beauty; few of the Spanish horses of that date being much to look at. He could jump, and under Ainslie's tuition was taught to jump better, his owner, moreover, never sparing him when hunting began and his duties as earth-stopper made heavy demands upon his stud. I do not think the desire to win the race had often been absent from Ainslie's mind, when February came round again and the Meeting was fixed for the last three days of the month. He knew that he would have two of the best jockeys in the

Service against him, and that "Jerezano" was not thought fast enough to win ; but if he was beaten—well, so let it be : he would try again.

The course was laid out in the neighbourhood of Campamento, advantage being taken of a stream at the bottom of a rocky gully for the water jump, and the fences being either built-up banks or constructed of telegraph poles and hurdles interlaced with gorse. Ainslie had two mounts on the first day and one on the second, scoring one win. When the time arrived for what was, to us, the principal event on the card on the third day of the Meeting, nineteen horses went to the post—a crowd that was certain to be thinned at the first four fences.

Ainslie's place was second from the left, if I recollect rightly, for he remarked to me—"A poor place ; nine horses out of ten swerve to the left, so we must look out."

The remark proved prophetic. At the very first fence, his neighbour changed the spot more than once at which he meant to take it, necessarily communicating his indecision to his horse and upsetting the field behind him. The final result was that he cannoned into Ainslie just as "Jerezano" was landing, and threw both horse and rider to the ground. Nor did mis-

fortune stop here, for in getting up "Jerezano" struck his rider in the face, cutting one lip badly and knocking out a tooth, before making off on his own account.

Ainslie was quickly on his feet, and his horse as quickly caught by Jim the earth-stopper, who, report said, had backed him heavily. Once more in the saddle, his face now smothered in blood, it looked for a moment as if all hope for him was at an end, especially as the rest of the field were already approaching the second fence ahead. But calling "Let go!" Ainslie set out on his stern chase, "riding"—as Jim subsequently continued to repeat many times—"that cool an' quiet like, an' for all the world as if nothin' hadn't happened to un, bless yer. Ther', I knew'd he was a right un; course I did!"

Such a lead was not to be overhauled in a minute; but slowly and surely, Ainslie continued to creep up, till just after passing the Stand for the first time, and amidst the resounding cheers of the company, he reached his horses. It was anybody's race after that, five horses being still together at the last fence but one. The favourite, "Saracen," drew out when this had been negotiated, with "Jerezano" lying just behind him. There was

a fall in the ground all the way to the last obstacle, and the rider of "Saracen" continued to put on the pace, while "Jerezano" was being obviously steadied by his jockey. The two were not more than a length apart when they landed into the straight. Then Ainslie sat down and rode for all that he was worth, the verdict of the judge a moment later being—" 'Jerezano,' by half a length."

The win was popular, for all reasons; and one visitor who had come out to the Rock in his yacht, and who was known on many a course in England, was heard to remark afterwards to his Excellency, the Governor—"I have seldom seen anything prettier than the way in which that boy, if I may call him so, steadied his horse for the last fence—it was the boy that won the race, not the horse!"

But while such doings naturally brought him into prominence in the society of the place and he became well known among the officers of the different corps of the Garrison, he had also been, from the first, gradually acquiring a position in the minds of the non-commissioned officers and men of his own corps. To begin with, when he joined he knew his drill perfectly, and instead, therefore, of being two months on the barrack square under the drill sergeant,

was dismissed the first day and put on the duty roster. It is true that the senior Major, not being able to credit such proficiency, had, when in command of the parade, endeavoured to stump him by setting him problems to be solved there and then by moving the men ; but he altogether failed, and the men themselves took due note of the fact.

Then again, he was gifted with an excellent word of command, his voice being extraordinarily clear and carrying far, with a perfect grasp of that subtle point, interval, and without any trace of hesitation. As time went on, he was now and then—to his infinite delight—deputed to take the adjutant's parade, the men working beautifully under his hand on these occasions, and this being no idle assertion on my part, but a fact noted by all of us at the time.

Perhaps they felt they knew him, in the same way that he was getting to know and to understand them—their light-heartedness and generosity, the spirit and the sterling qualities that distinguished the large majority of them, the pitfalls that surrounded them. He had the rare faculty of never forgetting a name, and as an Eton boy it had been the amusement of his school-fellows to get him to stand at the

door and name those who passed along the street—an achievement in which he was rarely at fault, being also generally able to add the boy's house and the name of his tutor. So here, with as many as three hundred on these parades, he was often able to call a man by name, and if it was a common name to add the letter of his Company.

I know that he was always thinking of the men, and while being too junior in rank and service to initiate fresh departures himself, he was at the disposal of anybody at any time, in such entertainments as "Sing-songs" and Regimental theatricals. Comic songs were somewhat painful things to him, but he was content to remain at the piano for the greater part of the evening, playing accompaniments and bringing some refinement into them, checking vulgarity of all kinds at rehearsals, and now and then singing a really fine song himself or playing something "just to raise the standard a bit." The men grew to know him exactly, and were perfectly aware that, with him, anything of coarseness was hateful, just as was obscenity and bad language. He never rated a man or abused him when he heard anything of the kind; but his eyes would darken, and throwing his head somewhat back, he would

say quite quietly—"I wish you would drop that while I am here—and also when I'm not."

"Of course you and I can't do much," he said to me one day. "This place may be, in some ways, the best quarter out of England for us; but just look at it for these fellows. They are simply cooped up here within the narrow limits of the town and the two main roads, being never even allowed up the Rock, much less off it. Then, look at the never-ending round of guards and sentry-go, as often as not giving them no more than four nights in bed, and in a climate like this, with every devilry round the corner waiting for them to their ruin. Can you wonder at the drink and these eternal fines, and what a pass till midnight sometimes means in the morning? I tell you, I often feel half ashamed in going through the barracks in hunting kit, or when riding out, as we all do, into the country."¹

I cannot hope to record each of his many schemes as time went on, and how he narrowly escaped getting into trouble himself through his outspokenness on several occasions. He

¹ It is fair to say that the conditions mentioned here are now greatly modified. At the date spoken of Gibraltar was guarded as though besieged, five officers and many hundreds of men being on guard daily, besides pickets and other details.

learnt here by making mistakes, as he had learnt in his home in earlier days ; and if now and again his actions were misunderstood, he had a happy way of enlisting the sympathy of those in authority, approaching them with that irresistible manner of his, and laying his suggestions before them in such a manner that the initiative might appear to be theirs when the proposals finally took form.

It would be wholly false, if not indeed ridiculous, to suggest that the improvements in the general lot of the soldier on the Rock at this time were primarily due to him. Reform was in the air, and he merely chanced, having always been something of a reformer, to become one of the active agents in what was going on, and occasionally to take the lead. "I don't know much about cooking," he would say, with a merry laugh and a twinkle in his eye—"except what I learnt in the boys' kitchen at my Dame's, inferno of an evening that it was! They say we have got to begin with the men's stomachs—make a change in the baked and boiled on alternate days, and give them something more than the bowl of stewed tea and bit of bread between dinner one day and breakfast the next. I am all for that ; but my line will be to get up their appetites outside,

so that they may do justice to the fare when they return!"

He had, from the first, taken to play with and coach the men of his Company at cricket and football; being something more than a proficient at both games. He was also one of those who worked at this time for boating to be allowed, and permits to be given for fishing. Once again, he could play an efficient part here, and could prove himself to be a better man than nine out of ten he met, though always unconscious of this himself. The influences of his Eton life came to the fore, and what he had learnt in the historic Playing Fields and on the placid waters of the Thames, was bearing fruit in the pitiless summer glare of this great Rock and the blue waves that laved its feet.

In one other direction, however, he was certainly personally responsible for what was a new departure here. The Regiment was lying in the Casemate Barracks, and the wide ditch of the inner lines of the fortress boasted there some scanty soil. With the permission of those in authority he started gardening for his Company. There were three things, he knew, that never failed to appeal to the man in the ranks, and if the first two were children

and dumb animals, the other was undoubtedly a garden, even though the ground available were merely a few feet in extent. So the old truth, that the first thing an Englishman does, the world over, is to make himself a garden, received further confirmation here, and from Ainslie's small beginnings and the prizes offered in his Company, gardening came into general fashion on the Rock.

The whole length of that wide ditch at the Casemates held, in course of time, a continuous series of miniature gardens, neatly bordered by the whitewashed stones that are always a part of the business, and the stern lines of the fortifications were changed. People riding in from the country would stand on the draw-bridges and look, before passing into the tunnelled ways giving access to the fortress; and what they saw was a number of men in their shirt-sleeves, either contemplating, pipe in mouth, the result of their efforts to grow Sutton's vegetable seeds in Gibraltar, or tending such flowers as the sun suffered to live on this shady side of the great walls—with bird-cages hung here and there on nails, and the smaller children brought out from the stifling heat of the congested married quarters to play where they had never been before.

Ainslie was often down there himself in an unostentatious way, full of cheeriness, and evincing the keenest interest in all that he was shown. The old ideals were as strong in him as ever : in these gardens there was an appeal for beauty, just as in children's gardens on the sands of the sea shores of far off England, and beauty, the great civilising agent, would make answer mutely. What was being done here was not much, yet it would tell up in the greater whole. Barrack life was necessarily rough, with men in hundreds, crowded by twenties and thirties into dark and unlovely rooms. It could hardly be otherwise, apparently. But each individual digging and planting here would gather something. Each was a unit in a greater whole, and a still greater whole beyond that. And the one and the other were capable of being made better by those influences that were at work—here, now and always—and that were even more potent than that spirit of discipline and obedience, whose business it was to prepare for the great and, it might be, final call. He would often talk to me in such a strain, and with that touch of seriousness that had been always a part of him.

Sometimes, when he looked round these

men's gardens, he would purposely bring a lady or two with him, that at least some of the men might hear the sound of a lady's voice.

"Come along and see our gardens"—he would say to these—"You must come; and when you get there you *must* say a word to the men. Don't forget that these fellows are giving the best years of their lives in your service. A word or two of kindly interest coming from you will make them happy for hours. Don't be shy of them. I know there are rough ones among them—perhaps as rough as can be. It always seems to me, however, that the first thing we have got to do with even the worst, is to try and make them proud of themselves, and you can only do that by showing that you yourself are proud of them."

His very earnestness was infectious, and many who had hung back came forward and helped, so-called soldiers' gardens spreading, in time, wherever a few square feet of soil could be found. The majority never knew who had started the idea, and Ainslie would have laughed contemptuously had such been mentioned. But, once again, the men knew, and put a mark in their minds on that score.

Ainslie went home on three months' leave during our second hot season on the Rock;

and when he returned, took up all his interests with increasing vigour. His Colour-Sergeant told me afterwards that he verily believed some of the men had been counting the days, and that the Company's rooms seemed to brighten up when he reappeared.

It goes without saying that the Band had always occupied a considerable place in his affections, exercising the same spell over him that soldiers' bands had always done. As soon as his musical gifts were discovered, he was put on the Band committee at once, and from that moment spared neither his time nor his money in working it up to the highest pitch of perfection; getting additional acting bandsmen sanctioned; augmenting the Band fund; and purchasing the best instruments, that the tone of the wood or the brass and the whole volume of sound might be enriched.

I often used to watch his face when the band was playing in the stillness of the evening, and knew well what was passing in his mind. He would frequently get away at such times by himself, and never cared to talk, even when the item on the programme was ended.

There was in the ranks of the band at that date a man who possessed a tenor voice of altogether exceptional quality. As soon as

Ainslie discovered it, he arranged, when our Band performed at night on the Alameda, that this man should sing a song as part of the regular performance, and just before "God save the Queen" at the close. The song was always the same, and the effect was such, in the cooler air after the heat of the day—in the shadows of the pepper trees and the light of the moon—that hundreds came to listen, lodging themselves on the walls above the rippling sea.

The words were William Henley's "England, my England," and the music was Ainslie's own, played by the full band. I never think of those nights, now, without recalling the third verse:—

“Ever the faith endures,
 England, my England:—
Take and break us: we are yours,
 England my own!
Life is good and joy runs high
Between English earth and sky:
Death is death; but we shall die
 To the song on your bugles blown,
 England—
To the stars on your bugles blown!”

Before the end of that summer, one of the worst epidemics of fever known for years

visited the Rock. So severe was the visitation that the whole of our Regimental staff succumbed, the Regiment being for a time in command of a Captain. One of our officers died and several men, among them being our singer: the health of many others was impaired for life.

Whenever any of his own men were sick, Ainslie had always made it his business to visit them in hospital, and I know that at this time he frequently spent many hours there, talking to those confined to bed and sometimes writing their letters; reading to the convalescents, or sitting with a group of figures clad in hospital blue, in such scraps of shade as might be found in front of that great building. He was at all times totally without self-consciousness, and having been accustomed all his life to mix freely with the people of the land and go in and out of their cottages, he could enter these wards without shyness and talk to these men in their own tongue of the home interests that he knew were dear to them.

I remember well his coming back from the hospital on the evening that our singer died. He spoke almost indignantly, as his habit was when he felt things keenly. "Yes," he

repeated—"he has gone, like the others! And who shall say that he has not given his message? I see his age was only twenty-six; but don't ever think that the value of a life is to be estimated by the tale of the years. That is quite wrong. I tell you a child may leave things of beauty behind it, and more powerful for good, than the actions of many a hundred men. So here, in the case of this man of ours. Do you think people will forget his song?—never!"—and there was something of a choke in his voice as he finished.

Life—the life of the individual—was always regarded by Ainslie in the light of a work of art. His own, like everyone's, had been planned by his Creator; but he believed that the planning had been merely the outline, and that it fell to him, as to all men, to fill in the detail, to perfect the whole. The time allowed might be long, or it might be short. That did not signify. Time was a factor that pertained to our world; and some works of art might be marred by an overplus of time being devoted to them. Beauty lay primarily in simplicity, and the beauty that was itself imperishable would be attained when time ceased. Flaws there must be, marring again and again the outward symmetry of the plan; but here, once

more, there came to man's aid another thing of divine beauty—the undying promise of ultimate forgiveness. Unless I am mistaken, this was what always influenced him on the more serious side of his character, and that lay at the root of his keenest endeavours—of the perennial hope that never left him.

I have said before that the religious sense was strong in him. I have certainly never known anyone more punctilious about fulfilling what he considered the very profession of his creed necessarily entailed. He seldom spoke of such things, even to me. His life spoke for itself. And others knew it. More than once I fancied that I noticed in those whose lives would not have borne close scrutiny, a certain shyness when in his company. He never spoke of such, and he very rarely criticised. "Fault-finding is easy," he would say. "Any fool can do that. The job is not to do it. And I always try to remind myself of what I read once, somewhere in Goethe—'I see no fault in others of which I have not myself been guilty.' Well put for most of us, isn't it?"

As an instance of how strongly he felt that religion was a necessity to all, and at the same time how fully he realised that if it was to be

made attractive to the multitude in its outward form, brightness must be brought into church services by every possible means, the following may be given.

On moving up to South Barracks from the Casemates, our place of worship became the great school above the New Mole Parade. By some it was called South Barrack Chapel, though not a consecrated building. Ainslie no sooner grasped the situation than he asked his Colonel's permission to make use of some of the bandmen. He wished to form a choir. The band boys could all sing or learn to do so, and with them, and eighteen or twenty instrumentalists, more brightness might be brought into the parade services on Sunday mornings. He had sung in his village choir from boyhood, and was determined to see what he could do here.

There were rigorous rules, as he soon found, regarding what might be sung at these services, and the Psalms and responses were not among the number. So much the worse. He would get his music in somehow, and cast round at once to see how this might be done, being never tired of asserting that music was the most powerful to influence of all the arts.

A new Chaplain had been lately placed in

charge of the South District who possessed the gift of addressing men. Ainslie went to him and suggested a voluntary service on Sunday evenings throughout the winter, offering at the same time to find a choir. When the matter was arranged and the trammels of red tape here again finally negotiated, he never failed, when off duty, to attend the practices of this choir, and in fact trained those who came himself, and all of whom gave their services voluntarily. Many of the members were his own bandsmen, under the Band Sergeant; but among the singers were men of different corps, as well as always Ainslie himself. The Psalms and responses were sung at these services, and hymns were numerous, with occasionally an Anthem when the choir had attained to some proficiency.

Once again he tried his best to interest outsiders here in what was being done, keeping the religious side and his own part in the matter in the background altogether. He discovered a certain boy in the band who possessed an excellent voice, and set to work to train him with the utmost care in various solo parts. A little later, I heard him saying to a group we met on the Walls—"If you want to hear a good thing, come up to South

Chapel on Sunday evening. We have got a boy—he's very fat and is called Samson—who sings 'Oh for the wings, for the wings of a dove,' just first-class—you must come and hear him: don't forget." They came, and came again, and in time it was no uncommon sight to find a congregation there numbering close upon five hundred, and one moreover made up almost entirely of soldiers, with a sprinkling of their wives and children.

It might be supposed that Ainslie was rapidly becoming exceptionally popular by all that he was doing. In the common acceptance of the term he was nothing of the kind, the qualities that marked him in so many ways not making for such, and he himself never courting popularity. He was still the dreamer he had always been; he was reserved as ever, and retained all his earlier love of solitude. He was often to be seen going out or returning from a ride by himself, and, as often, sitting reading in a quiet corner of the library of the Garrison. At all times, when out and about, there was alertness in his every movement, accompanied usually by a quick action of the head and a keen look in the grey eyes. Even

on the hottest days he walked quickly, giving others the impression that he was on some definite errand. I do not think I ever saw him idle, and certainly never knew him "loaf"; his interests were too many, and his desire to be up and doing too keen.

There is no doubt that his profession always came first with him. He qualified early for promotion, attending many courses on a variety of subjects and generally distinguishing himself where examinations were entailed. Among other things he had acquired a useful knowledge of Spanish that often stood him in good stead as earth-stopper, and had also steeped himself in local history, constantly picturing the struggles of Nations that this mighty Rock had witnessed.

Then again, the romance that he had woven about a soldier's calling in his youth never lost its hold on him, but rather increased in power and intensity, even the monotonous round of duty and the daily life of the barrack square being powerless to deprive him of those ideals that he kept always steadily before his mind. To him, this was the resting and the training time. The latent strength was there just the same. Only the call was wanting to bring the whole to life. Here, in this fighting machine,

was invincibility, the inheritance of centuries ; and when that call came, this Regiment of which he was so proud, would justify itself and add a still more glorious page to its history. Such things to him were a certainty.

It was only on rare occasions that he would talk in such a strain. For the most part he kept his dreams and fantasies almost wholly to himself, being fully aware that those about him cared for nothing of the kind. He could meet these friends on commoner ground elsewhere—meet them and engage with them in all their sports and games, pursuits or undertakings whatsoever—meet them in full eagerness, because contests of all kinds gave zest to life and the spirit of rivalry was to him congenial. Thus, while on one side he might be a mystic, a poetic dreamer, on the other he was always the man of action, with cool indifference and finest pluck that was never daunted, though the things to be faced were the gravest that might come.

Looked at as a whole, it was not perhaps surprising that some failed to understand this being of many tastes and many talents and no less strange ideals. There was something altogether uncommon about this Ainslie Gore, and even to those of his own age he was not

exactly one they looked to make their close and intimate friend. He seemed sometimes to be living a life apart from theirs, though going with them often hand in hand. Thus some were, in a way, shy of him—his tastes puzzled them, his talents made them, in a sense, afraid, his exuberant energy overwhelmed them, his serious views of life belonged to a world that was to many here unknown.

So far as he was himself concerned, he was certainly not one of those to whom a host of friends was a necessity. To him, friendship was something sacred and akin to a love, and he could not therefore give this love to many. Yet he was by no means deficient in largeness of heart and ready sympathy on all occasions. I should say that he spent half his life in doing acts of kindness of which more than half the world about him never dreamed. Enlist his sympathy, ask his aid, and he was an enthusiast at once, and one that would not spare himself. In a sense he was the friend of all ; but he remained throughout his life the intimate of few, giving to these his love whole-heartedly and without possibility of change.

I have more than once spoken of the way his men regarded him. He had won the affection of many among them, and one and all

trusted him. His reputation throughout the ranks, I found out later, exceeded that of most of us. And if this gradually widened during these years, a circumstance arose at this time that added to it immeasurably in the eyes of the rank and file.

The epidemic of fever already referred to, had seriously reduced the number of officers available for duty. Many had been invalided home, and Ainslie, like several other subalterns, found himself left in charge of his Company, with the prospect of having to take it through the annual course of musketry at the North Front Camp in a few weeks' time. Companies were located at this hutment in turn, and it was during the period he had to spend there that Ainslie found himself suddenly in a position of some difficulty, if not indeed danger.

Among the men of his command was one possessed of a violent temper, and who shall be known here by the name of Clancy. Ainslie had often befriended this man, and had stood up for him on more than one occasion when he chanced to get into serious trouble, though he always felt that he had never really won him. Clancy's comrades no doubt considered him dangerous; but they liked him and knew him for a good soldier, admiring his bull-necked

strength and courage, and possibly considering that a company made up of men of his stamp would be likely to prove invincible on service. Had it not been for his temper, Clancy would long before this have been promoted: his failing was his curse, and on this occasion nearly landed him in gaol.

It happened one morning, at the 600 yards range, that Clancy had to fire last. He lay down, pulled trigger and missed. Loading again, he did the same, and Ainslie went over to him. "The bally gun won't shoot," growled the man, with many an oath added—"Missed every shot but one at the last something-or-other range, and now it's same here."

"Not shoot?" said Ainslie. "Get up and let me try." It was the custom with us when any man complained of his weapon to fire with it at once; so Ainslie took the rifle, steadied himself for a moment and fired, the signalling disk showing that he had scored an inner, missing the bull's-eye by a few inches. "There is nothing wrong with the gun; try again," he said quietly.

Once more, Clancy went down, looking black as thunder. The two sections in rear, with the sergeants keeping the registers, stood silently waiting for the result, and perhaps scenting

trouble. Again there was the crack of the rifle, followed by no movement in the marker's butt: the shot had once more missed the target. The next instant, the man had taken the rifle by the muzzle, flung it from him, and then stood there trembling.

"March the sections home," said Ainslie. "Stand fast this man and you, Colour-Sergeant, and the right file of this section. March off. Now go and fetch that rifle," he added, turning to Clancy. The man never moved. Once more Ainslie gave his order. The man's fingers were twitching; but he still never moved, and at the same time the Colour-Sergeant, as if doubtful, placed himself between the youthful officer and the man. For a moment it looked as if Clancy would attack the rest of those present. "March him to the Guard Room and confine him," said Ainslie, at last. The man found his tongue then; but he obeyed and was marched away, one of the spare markers bringing in the rifle.

The men in the huts were all agog. "Here he comes," said one,— "being taken to the Guard Room, see yonder." "Por ole Joe; wull there, he done hisself in this time, and no mistake," said another—"That temper o' his'll

bring un to the gallows, if he don't mind." "It's a District this time, and two years hard," remarked a man busy cleaning his belts, to be corrected by his neighbour with—"Go on with yer—I tell yer it's a Ginerall and five years penal. Once on that Guard Report you don't come off, and this here's insubordination." "Mut'ny, yer means," broke in another.

The men in several of the nearest huts were craning out of the windows, watching the party coming across the sandy flat, with the officer following some way behind; and the spare marker farther away still, carrying Clancy's rifle. They had nearly reached the white, dusty road leading to the Neutral Ground—the only one to pierce the English Lines—when they were seen to halt, and the officer to be catching them up.

"'Tain't unlike a funeral," remarked one of the lookers on; "we none of us shan't see ole Joe no more." "You bide a minute," returned another—"I reckons there's summut up—see? Where our lieutenant have got his hand in a job, it don't always come out as usual."

Ainslie told me all about it afterwards, under pledge of secrecy. To have to punish any man for trivialities was to him little short of

misery. Here was a much graver case. Instead, therefore, of at once going to compare the targets and complete the registers, he followed the others in the direction of the hutment, where he could see Clancy's comrades leaning out of the windows. He knew exactly what that meant and what those men were saying, just as he knew the conflict that was passing in his own mind, every step he took—the dictates of his own heart on the one hand, and the paramount claims of duty on the other.

He called to the party to halt at last, and came up with them. "Turn about," he said, when he reached them. Then he broke out with—"Are you going to disgrace the Regiment before the whole Garrison? I know that I am not going to let you do anything of the kind. Do you want to sentence yourself to penal servitude? You won't do that, if I can help it. I'll give you another chance: take it or leave it; it rests with you."

Clancy's fingers began twitching again, and his eyes wandered over the cliffs of the great Rock and then he cast them on the sun-burnt ground. Ainslie did not wait for the man's answer, but added to the Sergeant—"March

him back to the firing point, and then send one of the men to warn the markers in the butts. He has only two shots to go."

The Sergeant, a man who wore three medal ribbons and had many years' service, dropped behind for an instant, and muttered to Ainslie—"I'm an old soldier, Sir, and you'll pardon me; but if you gives this man back his rifle an' he misses, he'll turn it on to you and blow your brains out. I know the man, Sir, and he's vi'lent."

"Think so," said Ainslie.

Five minutes later Ainslie had handed the man his rifle and made him get into position—"Take time," he said—"don't be in a hurry. I want to see you make a bull." Clancy looked savage still; but the cloud had already gone partly from his face as he looked up for an instant at the young officer stooping over him. Then he took aim. "Crack," went the rifle, and up went the white disk. Ainslie's hope had been realised.

"I think we had better say as little about this as possible," remarked Ainslie to his Colour-Sergeant, after he had visited the butts and signed the registers. They were walking back to the camp together, Clancy having gone

on with the other men, his rifle once more on his shoulder.

“Strike me blind if I ever see’d such a thing as that!” ejaculated one of the men, leaning out of the hut windows in his shirt-sleeves, when the party was seen once more to be returning.

A bugler boy came out on to the steps in the full blaze of the late afternoon sun, and having filled his small lungs sounded “Come for Orders.” Ainslie stirred in his chair and opened his eyes. The world outside was coming to life again and people were beginning once more to move about. A fresh sentry had just relieved the former one at the main entrance, and being fresh after a sleep on the plank bed in the guard room, was tramping his beat, his red jacket showing up brightly against the glare of the white walls, and his bayonet catching the glint of the sun when he turned. He had two hours before him, and plenty of time to tramp. When his turn came to be relieved, the evening gun would fire a thousand feet above, pickets would be falling in and fifes and drums would be beating “Re-

treat"—the old familiar sounds travelling up the face of the Rock as they had done for nigh two centuries, finding their echoes there, and telling their stories at the close of yet one more long-drawn day.

The sun had already set when Ainslie and I emerged from the sun-baked South Pavilion, and on all sides there was stillness. We stood for a while looking across the placid waters of the bay—all green and gold—to the purple hills of Algeciras.

"I had such a dream just then, lying in that chair," said Ainslie. "All comes of looking through Drinkwater and Sayer and ever so many other volumes yesterday on guard. I really believe I must have gone through, in the time, all the events of the three years and seven months and twelve days that the great siege of this place lasted. And what a story it was! To think of these quarters of ours having stood, then, just as they are now. Those fellows must have all been heroes, even if there were bad ones among them. Just picture what they had to go through—attacked by fire-ships and bumboats, night after night, bombarded from sea and land, eaten up with scurvy and fever, the water scanty and bad,

and such provisions as they had going rotten in the heat, the town almost destroyed and in flames again and again, and starvation staring them in the face.

“Then again, imagine the whole population crowding together up there, at Europa Flats, when first Rodney’s fleet, and then Darby’s, and then Howe’s were sighted, bringing them at long intervals some temporary relief; picture that crowd of half-starved beings—men, women, and children—sick at heart, and yet raising cheer on cheer at the sight of those fleets in The Gut. And then, think of the inferno of that last attack, by specially constructed ships and the whole weight of the fleets of France and Spain; with that other concourse of spectators thronging those hills yonder that they might witness this giant’s fall—the bay strewn with wreckage far and near; but always with the old Rock frowning down at the whole, and remaining impregnable still.”

He was full of his old enthusiasms as he talked, repeopling the world with heroes, dreaming of their great deeds, and longing, as I know, that some small chance might one day come for him in the calling that he had made his own.

“ But after all,” he continued, “ it is not the great fights and the great deeds, any more than the great epics, that have the most lasting effects upon the lives of the many. I believe the silent things drive deepest and reach farthest. No doubt the people here were unable to grasp the meaning at the time ; but I always imagine that of all the many things this Rock has seen, the most moving must have been the sight of the two battered ships of the line entering this bay—in just such a light as this, perhaps, though it was the 28th October—the *Neptune* slowly towing in the *Victory*, with Nelson’s body on board.”

During our last winter a stroke of luck fell to Ainslie. One of his Excellency the Governor’s aide-de-camps went home on three months’ leave, and Ainslie was offered the temporary billet. His Colonel demurred at first, feeling that though he now had the requisite three years’ service, he was too young for such a post ; but he was overruled, and Ainslie took up his new duties at the Convent under the distinguished soldier who reigned there. His social gifts were many. He had

won his way among all classes, and now he was to be brought into touch with the host of visitors who came and went during these winter months, and who belonged to every nation under the sun.

Once again he ran the chance of being spoilt and made over much of. His many gifts, like his music, found their affinity in many hearts; he stood a splendid example of young manhood; and among those who now crossed his path, were some who were struck by the natural simplicity that was the secret of his charm, and who whispered together as they watched him that there was an exceeding beauty in this young life and sunny character pointing to great and ultimate success.

This last was quite true; and I think myself that he had, by now, come near attaining the ideal that Carlyle once held up before the eyes of a great gathering of young men—that he had, in truth, “grown to be one all lucid and in equilibrium—healthy, clear, and free, and discerning all round about him.”

By the time Ainslie's temporary appointment came to an end our years on the Rock were nearly over. The day before we sailed he went to the Convent to bid the Governor good-bye. The great soldier had always taken

an interest in him, and on this occasion led him down into the garden that he might talk with him, Ainslie telling me afterwards that his last words were these—"You must go to India as soon as you can. India is the place; there is practically no soldiering in England."

CHAPTER VII

THE SUMMONS

"THEY don't seem to value us very highly," remarked Ainslie in a loud voice, that those standing near him might hear.

"No," shouted a brother officer, with a laugh—"but that will be revised all right if we go to the bottom!"

A group of us had collected on the lee side of the main companion-way for a minute or two: black clouds racing above, a mountainous, leaden-coloured sea running, noise enough to deafen, and a whole gale blowing. We were four days out from Gibraltar, having had bad weather all the time, and for the last day and a half had been battened down in the Bay of Biscay.

That afternoon we had had to destroy and throw overboard three of our horses, these having received such injuries as to render them useless. At the same time all the men were sent down to the lower decks, to lie down there and act as ballast, this hired transport, No. 37,

being some feet higher out of water than she should have been. Our captain had applied for coal before leaving the Rock, in order to lower her a little; but unfortunately for us the Admiralty supply was just then short. So we put to sea as we were, and moreover with a complement of boats very far from sufficient to accommodate the crowd of men, women and children on board.

In the opinion of some, the seas we shipped should have gone a long way towards remedying the lack of ballast. Nevertheless, No. 37 continued to behave like a mad thing, rolling scuppers under and lurching so handsomely that considerable damage was done. The misery in the women and children's quarters especially, and also on the troop decks, was distressing to witness, and those of us therefore who could keep their feet had a busy time, both night and day.

Ainslie, I remember, though by no means a good sailor, was indefatigable in conveying help to all he could, setting a fine example of cheery indifference to discomforts, and spending a good deal of his time among the men in the semi-darkness of that vessel's hold. Over all that, however, it is well to draw the veil. We weathered the gale in the Bay, and an equally

bad time in the Channel, and finally, on a February morning in 1897, disembarked at a South coast port in a blizzard of snow that, clad as they were and coming from a warm climate, put many of our men into hospital.

It would have been difficult at that date to find a finer regiment anywhere. The men, for the most part, were of splendid physique; their average number of years' service was high; and we were fully up to our strength. We had suffered a good deal on our short voyage, and the damage to kit and consequent loss to the men had been severe. But with the mysterious faculty possessed more especially by soldiers, and that is frequently a cause of amazement even to those who command them, the Regiment disembarked as spic and span as if it had just come out of barracks ashore, and I believe made a considerable impression upon the inhabitants of that South coast port on marching in.

A fate, however, awaited us that was common then to all regiments arriving home from foreign service. Before many weeks had passed we scarcely knew ourselves. The splendour of our martial bearing had largely departed. Our Colonel's time was up, and several other officers retired. The time-expired men took their dis-

charge; a very heavy draft was at the same time called for, to be sent forthwith to our other battalion in India; and our ranks gradually became full of strange and very young faces: the Regiment was wholly changed.

The despatch of that draft to India brought about the first real separation between myself and Ainslie. Three subalterns had to go with it, and I was one of the number. At the moment, he was disappointed that he could not come too; but he was wanted elsewhere, and I know that he had already made up his mind to take the advice he had been given, and to obtain an exchange to India on the first opportunity.

"I shan't be long after you," he said to me cheerily, just before we parted. "Meanwhile, they can't wipe us out altogether. It is impossible for any power on earth to do that. A rotten system may reduce us to the condition of 'a squeezed lemon,' and all that we see going on just now may play Harry with us. But you can't blot out tradition, or destroy everything that rules here—a regiment lives for ever, whatever may happen to it. We shall rise again, right enough, and break into new life, with the old spirit about us still."

He had lost none of the hope and vigour

and "go" that had always marked him, and if some of us had begun to feel dispirited by what we witnessed, the effect upon him was that of a call for further effort—for still more determined fight on his part, and always without losing heart.

He came down with the draft on the day we embarked, and spoke enthusiastically of the future when we parted. I can see his tall figure now, standing on the wharf, when the rest of us were aboard the craft that was to take us as far as Southampton. He struck me more than ever then as the very beau ideal of what a young soldier might be—strong, clear-eyed, possessed of a keen love of his profession and immeasurably proud of it; fit to go anywhere and to do anything at any moment, and holding always by the old ideals that had occupied his mind from boyhood onwards.

He was acting adjutant at the time, and just before we cast off, some of the men seeing him standing there alone, raised a cheer. Then one among them—a bull-necked, powerful-looking man, known among the others as Joe—sung out his name, and the rest cheered him after that more lustily than ever.

The last bell rung to clear ship, we hauled slowly out, and he waved his hand and turned

to go. I knew exactly what his feelings were at that moment. The band on the jetty struck up a tune of many memories. We were moving through waters smooth as oil, and there was a brilliant yellow light in the western sky behind a dark mass of shipping on that still, spring evening. For a moment there was silence, and the cheering died away. The men crowding on the poop were listening to the band. Then they joined in, and started singing "Auld Lang Syne."

I had not been long in India, when the following letter reached me from Ainslie :—

"You see I am writing from Downham. I came up here to talk to my father about a possible exchange. It seems I can effect this with Ronald who, as you know, is invalided home with dysentery. Only one thing rather sticks in my mind—my dear old people seem disappointed I should be going abroad again so soon, though they both, I need hardly say, put a good face on it. Of course I know very little about how matters stand in India, though from what fellows say and what I gather from the papers, there seems every likelihood of a big business on the Frontier before the year is

out. I wouldn't miss that for all the world, and I don't think my father would mind my going so much, if he thought there was a chance of my seeing active service. What he dislikes is the idea of my being stuck down in, what he calls, 'some beastly unhealthy station,' and asks, 'What's the fun of that?'

"My mother goes on the principle that where a soldier is sent he must go, but there is no reason for him to go out of his way to look for things. I chaff her a lot when she says that, and tell her it's all nonsense. These are not days—if there ever were such—when all one has to do is to stand in the barrack square, complacently waiting for something to turn up: that's rot! So the end of it is that my father is going up to the War Office to see a friend or two there, get the big wigs to sanction this exchange when it comes forward, and also find out, if he can, whether there is any truth in the reports the Press has got hold of. I will wager anything he gets his way: his cheery old face hasn't altered a bit.

"I won't talk about other things now, or other people. I am only here for three days and must leave again to-morrow evening. No doubt, when the exchange is sanctioned, my new Colonel will give me a couple of months'

leave, though always with the chance of this being cut short if I am wanted. Have you started polo yet? I shall have to get you to look out for a pony or two for me. We are getting on all right. Last week we had a batch of men from the depôt, and we are taking a few recruits. They are not bad, though not up to the old lot. Good-bye. A. G."

The old Squire experienced few difficulties at the War Office, and before the end of August the exchange was sanctioned, "provided no expense was thereby caused to the public." In other words, Ainslie undertook to join our battalion in India at his own charges, and at the expiration of the two months' leave subsequently granted him.

"Now, all we have got to do," said the Squire to Ainslie on the night of his arrival at Denton, his face wreathed in smiles—"is just to get our kit together and keep our eyes open as to what is going on out there. But I don't think we had better say much about it to your mother—time enough for that, you know—time enough for that! Meanwhile, you must go round all your friends here, and see what we have been doing. I can't say there is much improvement in the outlook. There is no end to the reductions in rent, and the demands of

the farmers are also endless. So, one way and another, there is not a penny comes back out of the estate now—or is likely to, so far as I can see. But, dear me, there is no reason for us to cry out. The property is clear of all encumbrances, and things are bound to come right in time—bound to; and what's more, they will then be all right for you. What's the use of a father if he can't see to that!"

Ainslie told me much of such talks in his letters at this time, speaking of his father's continued cheerfulness and energy as splendid. "It isn't as if he was young," he said in one of these—"he is already over seventy, and yet he is out and about everywhere, and has given up none of his County work. He has dropped hunting, of course, and for some time now; but talks of coming out with me on 'the First'—to act as marker, he says, and get a shot when he can, for we still walk all our birds, as in old days."

"I have been here a fortnight," he writes in another letter the following week—"and think I have made good use of my time: been round to every farm, and seen a whole host of old friends, on the land, and in the cottages as well. Of course I know how difficult it is

really to get at the inner thoughts of these people. Almost all are frightfully reticent, some keep their eyes on the main chance, and a few are humbugs—though very few, where they realise that perhaps one knows a little oneself.

“But apart from all that, there are folk here, and in plenty still, who I believe are true as steel and as honest as the day. Haven’t they known one from childhood, watched one’s foolery as a boy, and seen one grow up with them and theirs? Of course they have, and they know it. And therefore when I take their hands and look again at their honest faces, I believe I can trust what they say, and take their welcome in the way they mean me to. They don’t give their hearts to all—and quite rightly; but they never swerve from those they have really learnt to know. For my part—well, I love them all. They always stand, in my eyes, as part of my home; and for my home I would give my life.

“You know my ideas on that score. Perhaps I have inherited them from my father; and you should just hear the people on the place speak of *him*! They honour a man of backbone and one who shows fight; and in his case they have watched him closely through

all these hard times, marked things coming lower and lower at this old house, year after year, till the place has become silent and well-nigh closed, and seen at the same time, what Lawrence Allen of Compass Furlong—an old man now, himself—put into words, when chatting with me the other day.

“‘Ah,’ he said, ‘there’s one, anyways, as never spares hisself, and acts up to what er preaches. Our Squire bain’t no afternoon gentleman,¹ he bain’t. Does uns best, he do, straight on the nail, and goes hand in hand wi’ the rest on us—come what may, rough or smooth, wet or shine! I reckons as no un can’t take arter a better pattern than hisn’s. An’ it be my firm beliefs—same as old Mr. Drew was a-sayin’ at the ordinary, last Saturday as ever was—as when his time do come to stick up his stick,² you an’ we an’ the rest on us ’ll find as he’s tidied all up as it should be, and picked up every mortal one of his crumbs.³ That’s what our Squire be, an’ your fayther be; an’ we don’t want no strangers here!’ And then he turned away, as he always does, you know, ‘when he’s had his bit of a say.’

¹ A man who is always behindhand and neglects matters.

² To die.

³ To tidy up work neatly.

“We have got the jolliest little boy staying here—my Uncle John’s son, and my godson (think of that!); the said uncle and my aunt being here too. My father has taken to the child enormously, and no wonder. I think he will make a rare good one. You should have just seen the little fellow two days ago. I took him by the hand and led him down to the deer paddock, where ‘Alice Grey’ is spending the last years of her life. The old mare knew my voice at once when I came back here, and I fancy horses are like dogs in this particular, and that they never forget. However, I called to her, and she came out from under the shade of the elms into the broad sunlight and put her nose on my shoulder. And then I put little Reggie on her back, and we went round the paddock together; the little fellow holding on by the mane, not the least afraid, and indeed laughing from sheer joy. And just then, poor old Welfare tottered out of his garden at the back of the stables, and seeing us, stood there repeating more than once: ‘Well there—that’s just as it should be—just for all the world as it should be!’

“This letter has run to an unconscionable length; but I must tell you one thing more, from which I have been hanging back all the

time. I have been over to your people pretty often—a confession in itself! Two days ago, I met your sister on my way. Well; something happened. And after that we went into that room with the big Raeburn portrait in it. Of course I had to play. Music is sometimes responsible for a good deal, and it has certainly been responsible for a good deal here.

“When I had finished, and was just shutting the piano, she called out from the big sofa—‘Do you remember a song you sung, years ago, when we were all three together? I wish you would sing it again.’ So I had to sing *Ich liebe Dich* once more, and when I had finished, I looked across the room and saw that tears were streaming down her cheeks. Of course she said she was not really crying, and tried to wipe them away quickly, on my saying that tears at such a time were a bad omen. Then we both laughed, and agreed that omens were rubbish and tears sometimes very silly things.

“I know you will not say anything about this when you are writing home. Nobody knows, and we mean to tell nobody yet. You and I, however, have always been such close friends, that I can’t keep anything from you. I don’t think that if we are to be brought closer together even than we have been, and

what's more by the ties of relationship, we can ever become more like brothers than all these years of our joint lives have proved us to be.

"You will take me, I know, in the way that she has. And then, when the years in India are over, and all that they may possibly bring, I think I shall be content to hang up my sword in the hall with the others that have hung there long; though mine, perhaps, may fail to tell the stories that they do, to the Gores of a future day.

"Mind you keep me informed as to how things are going, and wire to me at once if you scent trouble ahead. There is nothing to prevent my joining before my leave is up, and I can start at an hour's notice, my kit being practically ready. I wouldn't miss a show for all the world. I have dreamt of such things a thousand times, and to be at last with the Regiment in one good thing, would be supremely splendid—and what is more, might tend, as I believe, to make one a better man. Good-bye. —Affectionately yours, A. G."

That was the last letter I ever had from him. Things moved somewhat quickly after that. A letter from me to him crossed this one, and though it was destined never to reach

him, I give it here because it explains the position of affairs in India, and how these led shortly afterwards to his hurried departure from his home.

“My last letter will have told you of all the different shaves that were going the round of camp and barrack, and it looks now as if some of these were working out true. The Mohmands have been misbehaving themselves, and what is more to the point, the Afridis and Orakzai have been playing Old Harry on the borders and the Government is getting restive. They can't stand such doings much longer. The Orakzai raided Samava recently, and the Afridis were in the Khyber, with Malakhand and Chakdara attacked by the Swat Johnnies before that. It will have to be stopped, though nothing has been settled yet, so far as we can learn. It will be a big thing if it comes, and all that we hear is true; but you will realise what fellows are when they begin to talk out here. Plenty of time yet. There appears to be no chance of our being warned for service, and leave is still being granted.

“Can't write any more now. We have a polo match to-day against the 5th, and as I am playing, I must go round and have a look at the ponies. Got one ripper, you know. Bought

him of Charley Hay, when they were ordered home—you remember him at my Dame's, don't you?

“Awfully sorry I have not been able to go on with this before. We have been rather busy. I will tell you in a minute about that; but first of all—we won that match, all right. One of us hit a lucky goal in the last five minutes. It was a deuced good game, all through, and my new purchase played A1.

“Well, since I began this a fortnight ago, things have been moving a bit quick. Of course you have had your eyes open and have watched *The Times* telegrams. The Mohmand expedition starts next week, we are told. A bigger business than this is brewing, though, and the Colonel has heard privately that it is quite possible we may be wanted. We should go up to Peshawar, though nothing is moving at present. I will let you have a wire directly I think you had better make a start, or you may miss the job—and where would you be then, with all the soul-inspiring things you have been conjuring up in your mind for years! At present, I picture you without thought of the shiny East, and concentrating your powerful intelligence upon how to get the best of those extraordinary wild partridges of yours, with

Giles to help you, all he knows. Hope you have been successful. Don't I wish I was along. I heard from my sister that you had been over to see them a time or two, and that they hoped to get you to shoot there later. Mind you go, or I fancy somebody may be disappointed!

"I have just this moment heard that the General who is to command the big show is actually on his way out, having been home on leave. I wonder they did not warn you at the same time! No symptom of any call for us yet. It is sickening, especially as others we know are actually on the move to Peshawar and Jumrud. However, we are ready to jump off at any moment, and of course they know that all right.

"I shall address my next letter to Port Said post-office. You will be on the way very soon, I expect, and possibly before this reaches you. Should you get it, however, don't forget that, failing Port Said, there will be letters for you, for certain, at Aden, and also at Bombay if you call at Grindlay Groom's offices in Hornby Road. From rumours I have heard since writing this far, I feel pretty sure I shall be wiring to you before long, and possibly in the next few hours, though I shall post this all the same."

Ainslie was coming back through the village with his father when my telegram was delivered to him. The Squire was riding his cob, and Ainslie was walking by his side, with his gun on his shoulder. They stopped for a moment in the roadway when the boy caught them, and it happened to be just in front of Susan Mantel's little shop, so she told me later, and "when she wer' on the point of servin' a customer with a nice bath-brick—that she wer'."

Ainslie read the message to himself and then aloud to his father, thrusting it hurriedly into his pocket, and quickening his pace so that the Squire's cob had to jog to keep up with him. This is how it ran, the original being before me as he received it: it marked a red-letter day in his life, and he wished it kept:—

"Start at once. Call letters Aden and Grindlay's Bombay."

Susan Mantel saw the whole episode, and being a woman of discernment as well as having had a talk with Ainslie a day or two before, put two and two together, and, according to her own account, there and then remarked to her customer—"I knows exactly what that be, Mrs. Pryn, I says—knows exactly, I be bound I does. 'Tis his summons. He be called for, and may the Lord Almighty, I says,

not make it a call for he. I got no faith in them blacks, Mrs. Pryn, I says—not a mossel, I haven't. And what our por soldiers a-got to do to kep 'em in their place and lern 'em how to conduct theirselves, nobody 'ouldn't believe. The young Squire, ther', was only a-sayin' to me t'other day, I says, as ther' was great odds among 'em and as no trustes wasn't to be placed in 'em.

"But ther' now, Mrs. Pryn, I says, jus' look at they two a-goin' along together, like—th' old Squire, and hisn's bonny son wi' gun on shoulder. Ah!—a brave look, has our young Squire got wi' un, I says—a brave look. I allus said as ther' wasn't never no un wi' such looks, the country round, and no un wi' a bigger heart or kinder ways wi' un. Us'n all knew'd that. An' I bain't ashamed, Mrs. Pryn, I says, to own to it—I loved un as a child, I says, and I loves un now, though it 'ouldn't be seemly, like, for me to say so much to many—that it 'ouldn't. Ah well, ther'—th' old Squire, his good lady, and the son. Wher' be you a-goin' to match they, I says? Nowhere, I says. Brave an' bold, that's what he be, bless un!"

It was four o'clock on the 29th of September

when my message reached him. Before six he had left his home and was on his way to London. Of his doings after that, little is known beyond what he left recorded in the small penny account book that he carried with him, and in which he wrote down certain things from day to day. The writing is very minute, and being in pencil was already much rubbed before it came into my hands; so much so, indeed, as to be almost undecipherable in places.

With the book, when I found it, were a letter from his father and one from his mother, which had reached him just as he was leaving London, and which I will give in what appears to me to be their proper place; a short note from my sister, already referred to; and two letters from myself which he found waiting for him at Aden and Bombay as I had promised. These were tied up together at the time by me, and now lie before me on this table as I write.

For such further details as were subsequently gatherable, I was necessarily dependent upon the one or two who met him on his long journey, especially in the latter part of it. All alike spoke of his eagerness to press on, and his keen anxiety to reach the Regiment before the real advance began. Untoward

incidents that would have served to check many, he brushed aside: if he could not get there one way he would get there by another. And when he met those who took a grave view of their responsibilities, and explained what could and could not be done according to the regulations, he seems to have listened respectfully and then to have taken a line of his own, cost what it might.

At no time does a man declare his own character quicker than on a campaign. In Ainslie's case, those who met him here—and particularly at the point where he ultimately struck the line of march—tell how greatly they were impressed by his depth of nature and high-souled sense of duty. "He was always ready to lend a hand," said one. "I don't think I ever saw anything to beat his self-forgetfulness and invincible good temper, and we certainly all admired his splendid strength and physique."

"I never met a man," wrote another, who chanced while in command of a mule battery to be thrown into close company with him for a large part of a day and a night—"I never met a man who possessed a greater share of what I will call the compelling power. There was a natural charm about him that

simply won my heart at once, and at the same time brought me over to his views that I had at first felt bound seriously to oppose. I can only tell you that though he was a much younger man than myself, I ended by feeling I must give him all he wished. His energy was infectious, just as there was something captivating in his whole bearing. The very truth that was in the man shone out in those grey eyes of his and rang in his every word, so that we who met him out here, as I did, for the first time, asked—‘Who’s that?’—and then looked, and looked again.”

CHAPTER VIII

EASTWARD

I do not propose to give the whole contents of this stained and crumpled diary, however great its human interest might prove to some. Many of the entries are of a private nature—references to his home and to mine; to his past life, and his hopes for the future, both in this world and the next. The very last thing he would have wished would have been that such thoughts as escaped him here, and that he jotted down during the enforced idleness of a long journey, should appear in print for the rest of the world to discuss and criticise. He was intensely reserved, and seldom referred to those things that were linked with his inner consciousness. What he felt most he at all times spoke about least. And knowing this, I have thought it right to give here only such entries as serve the purpose of the moment.

“ We are banging along across France. The sun has only been up half an hour. Let me

see—it's Saturday morning: must date this—*Oct. 1st, 1897.* Poor pheasants! I expect Giles has killed his brace by this time, to keep the day. In thirty-six hours from now we should be in Brindisi. Been rather a fool, I'm afraid. Must try and make up for it by going as much quicker than the post as may be possible, and as nearly as quick as a telegram as I can. The truth is, I ought to have started a week or more ago. But I was torn in two, and dallied on: it's the old story! A woman is often altogether too strong for a man; and that is just the reason why she may lead him on the road to heaven—if she has it in her—or send him straight along the one leading to somewhere else. It is a mystery, and will remain so. I believe that if all the other greater truths of life were found, one by one, to be bubbles, and were duly pricked, this one would remain, to defy the rest of us to the end. Glad I'm not a woman: it is sufficient responsibility to be a man.

“I was so hurried yesterday, before leaving London in the evening, that I hardly had time to do more than glance at two letters from the dear old people at home. I have just read them again, this afternoon. They tried their best to keep touch with me, so long as

I was in the Country. How like them! They can't reach me by letter again, for a long while."

The two letters referred to here, I found upon him later myself. I have just undone them, after all these years, and tried to smooth out their creases and their frayed edges. They are like sacred things to me. The first, given here, was from his father; the other from his mother.

"DEAR SONNIE,—I know we have said our good-byes; but your mother wants to try and reach you for a word or two more before you leave London early to-morrow, so of course I must back her up, and, after the manner of us men, put all the blame of this epistle on the woman! I expect your mother feels there are some things she can trust herself to write rather than speak; and there are plenty of things that women, and especially mothers, can put into words better than we can. But whether this is right or not, I am not going to be left behind where you are concerned, even though I repeat myself.

"I am so very glad, as I said, to think of your seeing a bit of active service, and know well how you have always hoped for a chance of

the kind. Most of us are the better for such experiences, and I go so far as to say that it would be well for all men to go through some real hardship, or danger, or privation, at least once in their lives, and before they are much more than five-and-twenty. Every man, woman and child here will look eagerly for news of you, and also to seeing you back before very long. You have lost your leave and the cub-hunting, and they ought to let you have another turn as soon as this job is over. Anyway, won't we just about give you a welcome when that great day comes!

“Many of the old folk here are scratching their heads over your unceremonious departure, and saying they would have liked a grip of your hand before parting. I met old Willum on my way back from the stables, after telling Welfare someone would have to take this, and he said, with pull of forelock that is now passing out of fashion—‘Ther’, I does hope, to be sure, that the young Squire’ll come safe back, an’ not get hurted: can’t afford to lose the likes o’ he.’ I told the old man that you would be all right; but with the usual deep wisdom of his class, he would have it that ‘furrin’ parts wus furrin’ parts, all said and done, and none on ’em wasn’t old England’—

an assertion that I have difficulty in combating. Mrs. Shaw said much the same when I passed her at the back door, though she took on most about 'the dangers of the girt waters,' and seemed to think, while she has never seen the sea, that she knew all about them from a lifetime's acquaintanceship with the Severn floods.

"I like to hear them talk like that. It goes to show that when you have once won the hearts of the best of them, they will no more change their affections than Molly would, who lies by my side as I write. Of course it is only to be got by living with them and growing up with them and theirs. And as you have very certainly done this, I trust some day you may find that affection stand you in good stead. You know these folk and all their ways and wants; and when you come to live here in your turn—as the members of our family have done, one after the other, for long—your very familiarity with them and with the land, should teach you the line to take under all skies and all conditions of weather.

"I am not afraid, anyway, and the one great joy of my heart is that I have you to follow me. You'll look after the people and the place, and keep up the traditions of the family

—no one better! If I am not here when you come back, don't forget what I have often told you; and some day, when you have chosen a wife for yourself—and that won't be long, I hope—bring up the next generation on the same lines. Well, that's enough of that, and I will only add that all my hopes in such directions—and family and home are *everything* to some of us—all my hopes are centred in you.

“Dear me!—when one comes to think of it—how I envy you! It seems a long time back to the Crimean days and the 8th September '55. When we tumbled out of the trenches that day, you know, we had 260 yards to go to reach the Redan, and the ground as bare of cover as the back of my hand—just whitish rock and stone and rubble—and uphill pretty near all the way. They were flinging grape and canister into our teeth and our left flank at the same time, while the fire from the parapet took us on the right shoulder. I tell you it swept the ground like hailstones in one of our northerly gales on the Severn flats, and how anyone lived through it I can't say. We gained the ditch edge, however, and dropped in, and I don't think there had been much amiss with our line as we came on; but we

couldn't hold our ground and, worse luck, were presently recalled.

"It was just in that open stretch that we suffered most, and the pity was that it was all thrown away. We lost two hundred and twenty-one in killed and wounded in the old Regiment alone, and out of eighteen officers of ours that went in, there were only two that came out alive and untouched—your old father having the luck to be one of them. May it be so with you: I feel sure it will be. Good-bye. I won't say any more.—Ever your affectionate father,

RUPERT GORE."

"DEAREST SON,—Your father says he will send this over to Actover this evening, so that it may catch the late post and reach you before you start in the morning. After you left, we both went back to the library; but your father kept repeating to himself, as he looked out of the window, just this—'As straight as a line—he'll go as straight as a line—I know that right enough!' He was talking to himself and looking across the park to the high woods. Of course I knew what he meant; but it was too much for me, so I have come away here to be alone and to write this letter to you.

"Don't think me very silly; but it is not

easy for a mother to part with a son, especially if she has only one! Of course it is natural that you should wish to be off, and I try to remind myself that if mothers can't face such things in the way they should and give their sons to the fighting Services, as your father always calls them, there is not much hope for the Country. So I trust, dear boy, you will not think I was wanting in spirit in anything I said to you. I never thought yesterday that we should be parted so soon. It has all come so suddenly. I was looking forward to the rest of your leave, and to several things that I fancied might happen in the time. All the same, I had noticed that you and your father seemed to look for *The Times* more eagerly than usual, and think now that you were hiding things from me, which was very wrong of you both.

"And now it is all over and you are actually gone, within two hours of that horrid telegram coming. Well, you are not the first of your family to leave these doors on much the same errand, and in that lies part of the pride of the place and of your name. I like to think that. Such a fresh call as this, seems to light old fires anew, and to bring into our lives again those whose doings are too easily forgotten. I know, in my case, it will send me round some of the

old portraits with quite fresh interest, though that should never be.

“And now as to yourself, my dearest son. I have no fear but that God will bless and protect you, and bring us all three together again in His good time, and when this service of yours is over. That He will help you in all that may befall you, I shall pray both night and morning, and many times a day. You will be always in my thoughts. I know that you will do your duty fearlessly, and as your father calls it—‘go straight’! You have always done so, from the first—here, in your home. We all know that, and I above all, for perhaps it is often the mother who knows the son best. You have never given us trouble—never once! I think you will be pleased to feel that, now you are called away to scenes of which we women can know nothing. Some day, perhaps, you will be a great and good soldier, though I know you laugh at such ideas yourself. You are quite young yet; but your time will come, and then, in my old age—if indeed I and your father are not getting old already—I shall be so proud of your doings, and thank God with a grateful heart, as I often do now, for such a son.

“But here is your father, telling me I must

stop, so perforce I must obey. He has just come in with a letter in his hand, looking rather guilty when I laughed at him for trying to make out it was all for my sake that he was sending this by horse messenger to Actover. I leave you to picture the expression on his face, when I guessed he had been writing to you himself. He has retreated at this moment to the big chair in the corner, where I have so often seen you lolling, with many of your favourite books about you; and I believe he has gone there on purpose, and because it was your particular chair, for books are not the same living things to him that they have always been to you. If the truth must be told, you men are not half as brave as us on some occasions, and in spite of all your father says, I can see that he feels your going intensely, and is just keeping himself up by talking and doing anything that comes to hand. Once more, then, dearest boy—your old mother's best of loves—good-bye and good luck, and may you be brought safely back to us before so very long. —Your loving mother, EDITH GORE."

"*Oct. 2nd*, BRINDISI HARBOUR.—The moon is shining—not just on us, but miles and miles away out at sea, leaving a silver streak on the

very limit of the horizon. By and by the light will work our way, and this harbour and town, and accumulated mass of shipping all along this wharf, will be flooded with it: the silver-grey clouds will have drifted slowly and solemnly before the faint airs that are their sole companions, to create further beautiful effects here, and for the benefit of all who care to look.

“How I wish people would sometimes walk at night. They little know what they miss. Give them pavements and gas lamps, and they will trudge, shop-gazing, till they drop. Suggest their leaving their houses after dark in the country—to come over the hills and look down at the moonlit valley and the mists that hang at the bends of the river; that float here and float there and are gone again, like the life of a man—to enter the woods and listen to its many sounds, in storm or calm; to tell the trees in winter by the forms of their dark limbs against the starlit heavens ere the moon is up, or by their voices in the winds—to walk through the glades in summer’s shortest nights, when the warmth rises from the ground where the sun has beat all day, and Nature seems to be panting in the stillness—to watch the golden glow, where the sun went down, travelling now

from the West to the North, and from the North onward to the East again, to be turned once more to silver at the dawn of another day ;—suggest their leaving their houses and seeing some of these, and a myriad other things that are only to be seen and heard and felt in the night hours, is to be thought at least strange ! More's the pity.

“ *October 3rd.*—Monday morning. We left Brindisi about midnight, and are now steaming straight for Port Said. I have just been looking through the itinerary of my journey, as made out in London on Friday. I could not have done it at all, had it not been for the extraordinary kindness of the P. & O. Company and Cook's. They seemed to take quite a personal interest in the matter. That's the best of going to great firms. You get the best of everything. Of course you pay for it ; but the best pays, whether you are going a long journey, and hope, as I do, to reach the end without losing a minute, or merely want to take a long walk in the best shoe-leather.

“ Well, this is how they tabled it out for me—to begin at the beginning :—

“ Leave London, Friday evening, September 30th.

“ Reach Brindisi, Sunday evening, and leave about midnight.

“ Port Said, morning of 6th October.

“ Suez, on the 7th.

“ Aden, early morning of the 11th.

“ Bombay, on the 16th.¹

All depends upon the hour we reach Bombay. That's the crucial point, because, otherwise, I may miss the Punjab Mail, leaving at 5.15 P.M. If I do so, there will be the clear loss of a day, and I shall be kicking my heels in the streets of Bombay. From there to Peshawar takes two days and a few hours, when of course the fun will begin. But no doubt letters at Aden, or somewhere, will tell me what then. If I am lucky I ought to reach the Regiment soon after the 20th, and my leave is not up till November 2nd.

“ *October 4th.*—We are rather a miscellaneous crowd on board: hardly any soldiers, the majority being bound for other places than India, and a few going no farther than Egypt. We have already started cricket and other games, and great fun they are. There is also

¹ It must be remembered that these dates refer to seventeen years ago, the P. & O. Company informing the writer that, since 1897, the acceleration in contract service outwards, between Brindisi and Bombay, now amounts to seventy-four hours.

a small piano in the saloon, and I go and strum on it sometimes in the afternoon. The worst is, people will come and bother me to play jigs I never heard of, and just when one wants to be alone. I try to accommodate them as best I can.

"October 6th.—Port Said. Early morning. What a place! Looks as if the dregs of the whole world had been swept in here and left to rot in the heat.

"We were getting on all right in the Canal till this afternoon, when we were pulled up. A large steamer aground ahead somewhere; and here we have been for nearly two hours, with high sandy banks on either side of us. It is rather maddening, for I keep counting up the days and the hours and the minutes—and it may well be a matter of minutes to me.

"October 7th.—We are just passing Suez, late to-night, and have already lost some time. We are getting up a concert for to-morrow evening, and are going to have the piano on deck. I wonder what a concert will be like in the heat of the Red Sea. I am singing 'Tom Bowling,' for the benefit of the crew—and I hope, for the passengers as well. Surely Tom Bowling himself is one of the immortals: he'll never die, though his soul has gone aloft many

years now. He certainly played his part, and left an indelible mark behind him. Wish I could!

"October 10th.—The heat has been great, and the wind being with us has made it ten times worse. A dreadful thing happened yesterday. One of the quartermasters had gone up to the main cross-trees, and fell from there into the sea. A boat was lowered at once, and the ship was stopped. I shall never forget seeing his cap afterwards, floating on the water where he went down. Some say he must have struck his head against one of the open ports, and so sunk at once. Anyway, after rowing about for nearly an hour, the cap was the only trace brought back by the boat. He leaves a wife and four children, and we are getting up a subscription for them. We always fly to money. Very naturally. In many cases it is our only way of showing sympathy. We have put off our second concert. To-morrow we shall be at Aden. We ought to reach there very early in the morning; but we shan't, probably, till after mid-day.

"October 11th.—Aden. Here we are, at last, and about half a day late. Can't be helped. One good thing is that I have got the letter I wanted, and have read it again and again.

I feel quite in heart, though I have evidently missed a lot of the preliminaries. I think I shall be in time to reach them before the fighting begins: will try my level best. Wish to goodness the ship would go on. Every minute may make a difference."

The letter referred to is the first of those I wrote in the hope of reaching him on his journey out. I found it with the others at the time, and give it here:—

"It was no use my writing to Port Said: the letter would only, I feel sure, have missed you there, so I shall try my second string, and hope this may reach you at Aden. Don't forget that another letter will be waiting for you at Bombay, to tell you the latest. You must call for it at Messrs. Grindlay, Groom's offices in Hornby Road.

"Here we are at Peshawar, right enough. The concentration had been going on for some time before our arrival, and also at Jamrud, so that the country, for miles round, seems alive with troops and transport and all the impedimenta of a modern army. You would be hugely interested in it, and it would take your fancy. It is all on such a big scale, and the

gradual growth of this great force, slowly perfecting its arrangements that it may reach death grips with pretty well certainty of victory, would fire your mind with all sorts of romantic ideas.

"There is no doubt that we are coming into touch with big things, and to miss these would break your heart. Bad enough your missing all we are at now—so much of which reminds me of our talk of tented fields when we were boys and devoured all the books we could get on the Punjab wars, the Mutiny and the rest. I got your wire all right, and was thankful to hear that you had started directly mine reached you. Every hour is bringing you nearer to your goal now.

"Of course I am brim full of knowledge. Perhaps you would like a little of it. The first thing that strikes one, not having seen such shows as this before, is, as I say, the stupendous scale on which everything is being done. It makes all one's previous experiences in peace time seem quite insignificant. This is the real thing. There is no doubt of that.

"First of all, our fighting force is to be 34,000 men, when all have come in, with not far short of the same number of non-combatants, and about 50,000 transport animals. That's a

jolly lot of mouths to fill every day and keep supplied with everything, from ammunition to firewood, food, and fodder. To start with, we have to get the whole crowd through the Kohat Pass, as our three columns are to concentrate at Kohat, at the first go off.

“There is nothing to be got in the country we have before us. It is God forsaken, they tell us, and the most difficult country in the world. Only two Europeans have ever visited it, and these never came back. There are no roads, only goat tracks at best, with miles of mountain torrents, where the water rushes over rocks and boulders and is icy. In the daytime it is often blazing hot, and at night beastly cold. The gorges are only wide enough for two animals to move abreast, and occasionally not that. They are also very steep, with precipitous descents. And, mind you, a plucky enemy holding every defile and occupying every ridge, and knowing every inch of the country perfectly.

“These Afridis and Orakzai carry the latest breechloading rifles; which, moreover, we have taught many of them how to use. They are grand marksmen and have plenty of ammunition, for having lately got in their autumn harvest, money has been plentiful

and they have been free to indulge their fancy in such directions to the full.

“No doubt you saw, before you left, that the Malakan had been attacked; that these Johnnies had actually invested Chakdara on the Swat River; and that all the tribes on this side of the Panjkora were up. Well, we are going to teach them manners, though some say it is not going to be exactly a walk over. Afridis are fighters by instinct, being simply born to the job and loving it; and to add to their natural love of fight, and by way of inflaming them, a notice has been sent round by their mullahs to say that this expedition of ours is a war of extermination against them, and that we mean wiping them out for good. Meanwhile, as they can, it is said, put not less than 40,000 fighting men against us of the quality described, I should not think ‘wiping out’ would be exactly easy, even if it were our way of doing things.

“There are three columns, and ours is the main column, under the chief. It is to be made up of 8 Regiments of British Infantry, 12 of Native Infantry, 6 Mountain Batteries, 1 Regiment of Native Cavalry, and 5 companies of Sappers. We are to advance over the Samana into the heart of the Afridi country—

to Tirah, a country where no British Force has ever been—and we are told we are to sweep away all opposition as we go.

“We may almost certainly be first opposed at the Sampagha and other passes leading into the Rajgul and Maidan valleys. The former is nearly due north of our line of forts on the Samana. The approach is fairly easy, they say, and the position can be turned on either flank. Once we are over that, we shall have below us the summer quarters of the Afridis—the southern valleys of Tirah, and almost immediately afterwards, we should be in the very heart of the tribal country.

“Well; that’s what we have before us. Our force is said to be the very flower of the army in India. Come along quick and make up the nosegay, and select the kind of bud you are going to be! We have grand times before us—simply grand! Mind you don’t lose an instant anywhere. When you have done with the ship and the trains, come at a gallop all the rest of the way, till you pick us up; and when any horse or pony you have begged, borrowed, or stolen, is blown and can’t carry you another yard, come on at a double—‘steady double,’ mind you, and ‘no running,’ as our first drill-sergeant use to say. He was much too fat to

do either himself. I know your staying powers well enough, and can see you, now, tumbling into Chalvey at the School Jump in the Steeple-chase, but winning it all the same!"

"*October 12th.*—About four days more and we shall be in Bombay, and, if I have luck, in five days after that I ought to reach them. That should just about do it. Some of the folk on board have begun to chaff me about my anxiety to get on, and last night one of the company in the smoking-room remarked to the rest—'I have never seen a fellow in such a hurry to be killed, in all my life!' All the others laughed, so of course I laughed too. At the same time, the idea of being killed is quite a new one to me. It never entered my head, and I certainly don't want to be.

"When we all laughed, another fellow added—'The truth is, he is tired of life!' That's a funny idea, too. Life!—why, life is the finest thing in the universe. Surely, though, one isn't meant to spoil it all by taking stock of risks and dwelling on possible wounds? That is just to stifle effort at the start. And as to being tired of life, I always think of that remark of Goethe's—'A man will be tired

of anything sooner than of life, and no one reaches the goal towards which he set out ; for however long a man may be prosperous in his career, still, at last, and often when in sight of the hoped-for object, he falls into a grave which God knows who dug for him, and is reckoned as nothing.'

"I think that is about right, so far as I can remember it and put it into English. The doctrine is rather depressing. If, however, we are in reality seldom able to attain our desires in their entirety—and all the rest that Goethe says here is true—that is no reason why we should not have an aim. To have an aim and to be prepared to risk all in its attainment, leads to happiness. I don't know if I am wrong, but I always think it best to go forward, without allowing the final, inevitable shadow to intrude upon the way. Life is given to be spent—spend it!

"*October 14th.*—We are going to have our last entertainment to-night. Two men are doing that dialogue that we have often had at home—two old Gloucestershire women in poke bonnets, telling their gossip to one another. Only one of the men comes from the County, and I don't quite see how the other is going to manage the dialect. You must start young to acquire

that and the inimitable pronunciation ; there is no getting it later.

“ I hoped to have stuck to the piano, so far as I was personally concerned, and quite enough too ; but several voted there should be reciting, so I have been persuaded to give them something in that line. I am sure I don't want to, and think they will be sorry they asked me, for I have found a copy of Browning in the ship's library, and have polished up my recollection of a poem of his that I once had to declaim in School Speeches, on the 4th June at Eton. It is ‘ Abt Vogler (after he has been extemporising upon the musical instrument of his invention),’ and I have still a vivid recollection of how my dear old Tutor tried to teach me *not* to miss the points, and especially in those two wonderful stanzas, the ninth and tenth :—

Therefore to whom turn but to thee, the ineffable Name ?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands !
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same ?

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power
expands ?

There shall never be one lost good ! What was shall live
as before ;

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
more ;

On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect
round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall
exist ;

Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor
power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-by.

“ I must finish this off for the present. To-morrow will be a regular rush. We are certain to be a good bit behind time, and I fear it will be afternoon before we are in. I don't mind how late it is, so long as there is enough margin left for me to catch that Punjab Mail at 5.15.

“ I was told last night by an old Colonel who is on his way to Madras, that the thing above all others for me to do is to avoid the Embarking Officer. If I go near anyone to do with the local Head Quarters' Staff in Bombay, he says, I shall almost certainly be caught and made use of to take detachments of troops up country, and thereby be let in for a loss of many days. As I am still on leave, there is no reason why I should put my neck into such a noose, so I shall take his

advice. The thing to do is to get to the Regiment: I shall be safe then.

"Our entertainment went well this evening, and the funny thing to me was that even the crew seemed to appreciate 'Abt Vogler.' I should have thought it would have been over their heads, and the heads, too, of many others present. The applause, however, was tremendous, and when it ended we all sang 'God save the Queen.' So there's an end of all that. It has been a cheery, jolly time, and I suppose we shall all be scattered to-morrow.

"To-morrow!—there is always the to-morrow, thank Heaven! We talk glibly of the finality and the end of things, but surely that is quite false. The course is continuous; the work to be done here, and *there*, without end. No one knows when his appointed task shall be judged as finished here, and when he shall be set one that is new elsewhere. Young or old, the uncertainty is the same for all. Better fix the eyes on the common goal, without over much questioning. And if the hopes we cling to so wistfully as the days draw on, leave us now and then feeling very tired, we may rest assured that the sense of weariness will vanish when the sun of time goes to its setting and that which is of eternity shall rise.

“It is getting ever so late and I must stop. The ship is quite silent, except for the eternal throb of the screw and, at intervals, the tread of one of the watch on deck. How ‘Abt Vogler’ runs in one’s head!—

And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep ;
Which, hark, I have heard and done, for my resting place
is found,
The C major of this life : so now I will try to sleep.”

CHAPTER IX

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

“*October 16th.*—Did any man ever have such a narrow shave! I just managed it, and that was all. The low-lying land was not sighted till tiffin time. That was bad enough. But we simply crawled when we got round Colaba Point, and it was past 4 o'clock when we dropped anchor. I felt inclined to jump into the water and swim ashore. It was a job to get a boat. Managed it at last. Landed at the Apollo Bunda, kit and all, having previously separated what I wanted with me from what must be sent after me to Peshawar. The rest comes out from England by next mail.

“When at last I got ashore, I took a *tickha-gharri*, and by bad luck dropped in for the stupidest driver on earth. He actually drove me into Apollo Street, which he must have known was up for repairs; as indeed we found, to my great annoyance. So we had to go back, and got into a street called Rampart Row, and from that into Churchgate Street. A

clock struck five as I reached Grindlay's offices in Hornby Road, and it was several minutes before I could get anyone to attend to me. Arranged everything there; got the letter I expected; jumped into the *gharri* again; made the stupidest driver on earth leather his pony; and ran for this train—just reaching it in time, and my kit being flung in after me when it was already on the move. It is all right now; and I am in India, and on the GIP. But just fancy if I had missed it! Quite possibly it might have altered my whole career.

“From this letter, it seems I may just reach them in time, and no more. I have read it over and over again, and tried to plot it out to the last minute. We are due at Agra at 5.45 to-morrow evening; Delhi at 9 P.M.; Umballa at 2.43 A.M.—that's the day after to-morrow; Amritsar at 7.57 the same morning; Lahore at 9 A.M.; Rawalpindi at 3.50 P.M., and Peshawar at 8.13 that same evening. One good thing; we seem to be going faster than in the old 'Indus': there are things to measure pace by now, and there are none at sea. It is all splendid.”

The letter that reached him in Bombay was my second, the last of the five that had been

tied up separately with the penny account book years ago. It lies before me once again at this moment, and runs thus :—

“I do hope you got my letter at Aden, for it will have told you things that could hardly have reached you before you left England. I fancy now that you should be in Bombay in less than a week, when you will of course get this.

“We have been having a jolly spell of hard work, and have covered some ground, too, between whiles, for here we are in Shinwari, our advanced base. But I must go back a bit. After leaving Peshawar, our column came right through from Bara and Jamrud, and reached the foot of the Kohat Pass on the 9th October. The next day we crossed and got all our lot through to Kohat, doing the eighteen miles without a hitch. The other two columns followed us on the 11th and 12th, and we all joined up and were ready for our next step.

“The Transport is a sight, and yet they say we haven't enough! There are animals of all sorts—ponies, mules, donkeys, camels—together with every kind of vehicle, from bullock waggons to ordinary go-downs. The

whole of this show is in charge of some 17,000 drivers of kinds. And all this that our army may live, and what's more, fight; with a place for the damaged in the way of a liberal supply of dhoolies and full hospital equipment. But you are bound to see all this for yourself. The constant stream must continue, to and fro on our line of communications, whatever we may be doing ourselves. You will find it pretty hot, and at night fairly cold—don't forget this.

“As soon as our huge mobilisation was complete at Kohat, we left there and followed the river to Ustazai, half way to Hangu—a distance of about a dozen miles, you will find it. There is a good camp there, standing on a conical hill, looking down a fertile valley. You can't mistake it. We crossed the Kohat River near Ratsan, the travelling not being bad from there all the way to Hangu, and past Darban and on to Kai. We were going North, after leaving Kohat—bare, rocky-looking country for the most part, the Samana ridge stretching out before us, with Fort Lockhart, away to the right, when we reached Kai. From this last, you will only have about twelve miles left to get to this place, and I only hope to heaven that you will come in before we go forward. I cannot say when the

real advance will be, exactly, these points being naturally kept dark; but it can't be many days now, and we shan't have far to go before the fun begins.

"At present we are still busy concentrating here, and, what is more, gradually accumulating twenty days' stores for 20,000 men. Our camp stands on two conical hills, and we are having enough to do in putting it into a state of defence: it doesn't do, apparently, to hold these Afridi chaps too cheap. Apart from convoy duty, what we are doing now therefore, and more particularly, is building zaribas round the extremities, with wire entanglements in the valley between. In some ways, we have had rather a rough time; but it has been awfully jolly and I have enjoyed every step of the eighty or ninety miles, or whatever it is we have come on our ten toes, since leaving Peshawar. The only thing that I have constantly regretted is that you were not along, and all the fellows say the same. But I must tell you what I can about our friends, or rather enemies, in front, and also something of the kind of job we can see plainly enough lies ahead of us. You will know, then, all that we do, and will be able to take your own line.

“We have already come into touch. On the 11th, a working party of Pioneers and 1000 Punjabis went over the Changru Kotal and were fired on. Luckily we had some other troops handy and a mountain battery, and the enemy were shelled with severe loss, and with no casualties on our side. The village of Dargai was seen to be crowded, and we know that large forces are concentrated in the Khanki valley beyond. The enemy have apparently posted themselves in front of the Shinwari position.

“The ascent from Shinwari, we are told, looks easy from the plain, but in reality is a steep, rugged, almost impassable hillside, with no road, only sheep or goat tracks and as rough as you like. Dargai, which is about six miles from this, and which we rather gather is to be our first objective, and from which we have to bundle these fellows out somehow or other, is a good deal higher than the Changru Kotal. On one side there is a sheer precipice, and there is only one point of access—not a very comfortable look-out, seeing that this approach is fully commanded from the ridge above, where the enemy have built themselves in behind pretty solid *sangars*.

“Well, that is all I have to say. I have

been writing this at odd moments to-day and a bit hurriedly ; but I am keen you should know exactly where we are and certain landmarks that may help you. You will want the inside of three days at least to reach us from Peshawar. Your only chance is to come on independently ; to be a little mutinous ; and to pick up a pony for yourself, by hook or crook. I can only say again—do your level best. We have a grand chance before us, and I would not have you absent for all the wealth of India !”

“ *October 17th.*—I have had the most amazing piece of luck. That sentence—‘You will want the inside of three days at least to reach us from Peshawar’—has been running in my head all day. It means that, via Peshawar, I could not expect to get to this place, Shinwari, till the 21st, at the earliest, and very possibly not till some days later, seeing that getting through the Kohat Pass, crowded as it is, must be no joke. However, if there are such things as good angels, I feel sure mine must be attending me pretty closely, for as luck would have it, a spare, dried-up looking, lean man, with quick, dark eyes and a keen face, entered my carriage at Agra, and we have

been talking ever since. He is one of the Indian Civils, and was once at Kohat. He asked me where I was going up country, and I told him my story as well as I could. He did not thaw at once, though the wonder is that anyone can be cold at all in this heat; but he became quite genial after a bit, and has given me no end of help.

"The outcome of it is that I am *not* going to Peshawar now. Think of that! He says that if I once land in there, the chance is I shall take a week to get on, if I ever do. I must leave the train at Rawalpindi to-morrow evening, and get another to take me to a place called Khushalgarh. By this means I shall save enormously, and avoid the main stream on the lines of communication. Khushalgarh, he says, is only thirty-two miles from Kohat. I feel that what with the heat and this unexpected stroke of luck, I shall hardly be able to sleep to-night. This new-found friend says he will tell me more to-morrow. He is going as far as Lahore, and there will be plenty of time in the morning to talk the matter out.

"*October 18th.*—I think I have got it all. My new-found friend had some maps with him, and by the help of these and his own intimate knowledge of the country, was actually

able to give me the distances from Kohat to Shinwari. The whole is 46 miles, he says, by Usterzai—12 miles; Hangu—13 miles; Kai—15 miles; and from there, 6 miles will land me at Shinwari. He reckons it would take about five hours by *tonga* to get from Khushalgarh to Kohat, and says that there would be no difficulty about getting on alone from this last, as there are pretty certain to be depôts every march; that is, about every fifteen miles.

“We have just parted at Lahore, both hoping that we shall meet again some day. I could not thank him enough for all his help. It just makes all the difference to me, and I feel fairly sure now that I shall be able to get through before they leave Shinwari: I’ll have a jolly good try, anyway. Delhi, Lahore, Umballa! Household words with us, and yet, in general atmosphere and appearance, so utterly unlike what one pictured them. The truth is, there is no conjuring up a true picture of such a land as this. You must have visited the East to realise it; and to smell the smell of the East once is to know it ever afterwards blindfold.

“We shall be at Rawalpindi in about an hour, so I must get my few things together a

bit. I wish I knew my way about better—or rather, knew my way at all; also that I had some Hindustani at command. The only two words I know, as it happens, are *jeldie jao*—the equivalent, I believe, for ‘push on,’ or ‘shove along’; don’t matter which, so long as they’ll do it!

“*October 19th.*—Usterzai. Just conceive the news that reached me on getting to Khushalgarh late yesterday evening! I had the bad luck to run against one of those strange individuals—very rarely met with in our Service—who seems to take a delight in the morbid, and loves to deal in the depressing. If it is any satisfaction to him, he certainly made me feel quite sick.

“It seems that yesterday, the force, or part of it, at Shinwari, left at 4 A.M., and that by 9.30 the batteries had already come into action against the Dargai ridge. At noon, a rush was made and the crest was carried. By this time it was 2 o’clock in the afternoon. Shinwari was eight miles away, over roads only recently made, and the little water to be had was three miles distant, apparently. So the main part of the force retired, and the rest followed, between 4 and 5, when the sun was sinking. What happened after that he did not know,

no further news having come through. He was, however, of opinion that it was the worst thing that had occurred in India for generations, and that to such fellows as these Afridis, a retirement on our part meant that they had beaten us. He added a lot more in the same strain, finishing up with—‘You seem to be in a confounded hurry; but you are too late—altogether too late!’ If I had not been a newcomer, and he much my senior, I should have told him what I thought of him.

“There was no getting on that night, as the *tonga* only runs during the daytime. It was already past midnight, and so I ate some of the cold chops and bread I had packed my haversack with at Rawalpindi Station, took a drink of water, and then rolled myself in my blanket under the lee of a wall and slept till dawn.

“The *tonga* left just before light, and I was the only one travelling by it. The *tonga wallah* was a good fellow and shoved along well; cracked his short whip with a long lash, made the most extraordinary sounds at the ponies, and occasionally blew a bugle-shaped horn. I should have blown it too; but hardly felt in the humour, and kept asking myself what the real truth was about this retirement,

and whether there was any truth in it at all. It seemed, as I thought it over, that I must have certainly missed something, and that was depressing. But if so, there was all the more reason for redoubling my efforts. We got an extra pony hitched to the outside of the shafts at one *dak*, and at another place a third was put on in front to help up the hills, for our load was heavy; both the other seats being crammed with things, and odds and ends hung on anywhere, and over the wheels as well.

"We had reached Kohat before noon—a rum-looking place, with a wall round part of it, about twelve feet high, and with an amphitheatre of hills behind. Much of the country seems just a savage waste, with rocks and stones everywhere, and brushwood formed of all manner of thorns, mimosa, and also wild olive. A few patches of cultivation in the lower lands, and here and there a grassy glade, with mulberry trees, and now and then a large walnut with a stone seat under it, put there by the natives. Great mountains covered with snow in the distance, with two great peaks higher than the rest.

"Though nearly the whole force had left Kohat, there was a busy scene there. The first thing I tried to do was to get a pony

somehow. Once again my luck stood me in good stead, or that good angel of mine, for I chanced upon a mule battery that was going forward this very afternoon, and got the Major commanding it to let me come too. So here I am with them, for the moment, and have reached this place, Usterzai, twelve miles on my way.

“The bad news was confirmed at Kohat; but I can’t make out if the Regiment was engaged. Nobody knew. It is said that the retirement was a ticklish affair; the enemy coming on again, and the desultory fighting continuing throughout the greater part of the night of the eighteenth. Retire! What could the Regiment have thought? It is horrible, though there was obviously no help for it.

“I am writing this with difficulty. The sun has set; but the moon is now rising. The effect has been splendid; the summit of the peaks on one side being lit up, and the cliffs on the other left in steel-blue shadow. I can’t make out the stars at all; but on such occasions as this, a man has to be ‘his own star,’ I suppose. It is a stern, rugged country, and gets worse and worse after leaving Kohat; the road following the left bank of the Kohat River all the way we have come, at present, and ascending all

the way, too. Shinwari, they say, is over 2000 feet above Kohat, and Dargai 2000 feet above that.

"It is terrible loss of time sitting here in this way, but it can't be helped. I am writing by moonlight now, and the men are lighting fires. There are the sounds of the camp on all sides—fellows laughing and talking, horses clearing their nostrils, the champing of bits, and the continual rumble of wheels, someone chopping firewood, and another working at a field forge. The smoke of the fires drifts off, and as the scent comes my way, it reminds me of Denton and the fires the men used to make in the clearings at home.

"I have just been having a talk with the Major, and have told him what I want to do. He is an Eton fellow, and has found out what little there is to know about me, and I have found out all about him. At first, he laughed at my idea that I should push on to-night. But he is going to back me all the same, for the sake of the bond between us.

"One thing he tells me, and this is that these Afridi beggars are hard to get level with, and never lose a chance. They move infernally quickly, and it is difficult to see them on the rough hillsides. Flanking parties may

think they clear the whole ground ; but directly they are gone, these born fighters come back again, having hidden themselves in holes or behind boulders. He says they always 'snipe' at a single fellow, though they rarely give themselves away by doing so at a big party. On this line of communications, he thinks I shall be all right ; but once off it, I shall have to look out. He was on the Frontier, in the show of two years ago, so knows all about it.

" I am going ahead shortly, and start in an hour. The Major has gone off now to get me a good feed, and also to feed an extra pony of his own, that I am to leave at the Field Park at Shinwari, when I get there. With decent riding, he says, he is certain the animal will do the job, if anything on four legs can. Of course all this is hugely exciting. I revel in it—just what I have longed for for years !

" It seems that the road continues on this side of the river for another two miles, and then crosses and runs along the South of the Samana range of hills all the rest of the way. I *must* do it. The distance is only about thirty-four miles, and I mean to try my best. Only one thing more—if anything happens to me, I trust the Regiment will believe I have tried to be in my place : that's all ! "

Such is the last entry in this tattered book of many memories.

“Yes, Sir,” replied the Sergeant, drawing himself up and saluting—“Yes, Sir; we seen him comin’ along the road yonder, leading a pony, and just as it was turning light. The Regiment hadn’t been gone—well, not half an hour, it hadn’t. Ther’ was smoke still showing from the fires, and some un—I forgets who ’twas—asks th’ officer if he’d have a cup of coffee, as ther’ was a drop or two of it lef’. But he turns round and says, with a bit of a laugh—‘I won’t go for to trouble about that,’ he says—‘got no time; thank you! Which way to the Field Park?’ Then he asks—‘An’ which be my best road to overtake ’em?’ So I showed un, an’ says—‘Yonder, Sir, see—that’s the line of ’em, a-windin’ away round yon bluff.’

“He jus’ seemed to smile, then; jumps on his pony, and touches un with his heels and was off. ‘Thank you, Sergeant,’ he calls—‘I shall catch ’em yet!’ An’ that’s the very last as I seen of un, for he had the look o’ one as wanted to get on, an’ no time to talk. No, he didn’t look partic’lar tired, he didn’t. His

eyes wer' as bright as a child's, and he wore a merry smile on the face of un, he did. Well, one of mi' own men said as much, arterwards, an' as he looked like one likely to be doin' execution, if so be he come to close quarters and got in!"

That was all I was able to gather in that direction. It was quite sufficient. He had done his last ride, evidently saving his pony as much as he could, and timing his journey to within twenty minutes. I wish now he had missed us by an hour, and also wish many another thing. I have often reckoned up those minutes, and ended the same way—a journey of many thousand miles, at so many miles an hour, and brought down, in the end, to yards and minutes. Missing us by an hour would certainly have made a difference; but so would half an hour, or a quarter, or any fraction of the minutes themselves. A little less eagerness on his part, another hour's delay on the voyage, missing the mail at Bombay or that friend in the train, the refusal of the loan of that pony for the night ride—anything, everything would have made a difference. No; it was just that twenty minutes, with the added time it took him to deliver the pony where he had promised to—it was just that

that did it, and brought him to the fatal spot to the fraction of a second, to meet a random shot. The line of thought has been followed, a thousand times, till it has come to be a tangled skein refusing all unravelling. Best leave it.

A long trail of dead and wounded were being brought down the steep descent from the summit of the *kotal*, after the second fight at Dargai, on the 20th October, 1897. Some of the wounded were being carried in one way, some in another, down the zig-zag track and between the rocks and boulders—on men's backs, in men's arms, on their crossed hands: so, too, the dead, slung as best might be, silently and with reverence.

The long trail wound its way down, under great cliffs, down hazardous slopes, through scrub that tore clothes and caught at everything. Below us lay the valleys and ravines of a savage, desolate mountain region; behind us, the scene, still warm, of one of the finest fights the Frontier had ever known; and with us, this tale of dead and wounded that had gone to make the victory—that scarcely more than an hour before had been a living, eager throng, going forward silently, with light in

the eyes and a catch in the breath, till of a sudden, in one quarter, the pipes rolled out the slogan, and in another men broke into a cheer.

It chanced that I was detailed to go back with others, as escort to one portion of the convoy of ambulance waggons, carts, and dhoolies, for the camp at Shinwari. We had gone some way, and I had been walking on the off-side of a waggon in which, with others, were two wounded brother officers, when one of the escort came round, saying—"There's one of ours a-hailin' of us down the *nullah*." The convoy was halted for the moment, owing to a block in front, and I dropped down to see what was wrong, for two were on the ground there, one of whom was kneeling on one knee and waving his hand.

"Ay," said this one, when I reached him; and for a moment I paid no attention to his words: they seemed to come from a long way off, and to belong to another world. "Ay," he said, again—"the vara fust shot as was fired. Then ther' was a sing out—'Sthretcher this way!'—and I dropped back; and ther' er lay.

"Ther' was no call for the like when I got to un, as I could see—sthretcher or naught—no

call whativer! He'd put in his time. Ah, reached us—ay!—come up at a run, he did; and soon arter it showed full light. Ther' was scarce a single wan amongst us noticed un—scarce a single wan—any more than us took count o' that shot, or knew'd wher' it come fra'!"

"They may try mi, now, for not bein' in mi place—they may try me bi Rigimental, or Disthricht, or Ginerel—they may try me by any bally court they like! Do you think I haven't took full punishment a'ready, through missin' o' the finest fight as iver wus? Do you judge as that's not enough for any man, for that matter?"—and the words seemed to hiss through his teeth, as if he were torn by conflicting emotions.

"Ah!"—he went on—"the Regiment's had a belly full of fightin' to-day, an' over yonder goes the truth o' that, as I can see. But who was a-goin' to leave un lying here, stark though he wer'—not me!—not for all the best o' the fightin' as could come, and though it wer' promised to last from dark till dark come back again.

"Do yer think as I would leave he to be mauled by them hell-thieves that hides and hides and we can never finds, and is as nimble

with their knives as they little Goorkha chaps yonder with their *kookries*? No fear! They shouldn't niver touch he. He wer' the bes' friend as iver any on us had—the bes' friend; and if it warn't for he, I'd be doin' time now—ay, doin' time now."

I recall looking at the man's face at that point. I had been dazed till then. His words came hot, and quicker and quicker, as though the temper rose in him. He had square jaws, a bull-neck, and powerful shoulders, and much blood had dried on one cheek. Then I knew. It was Joe Clancy, and he wore a full Corporal's stripes upon his arm. He only said a few words after that. We had other work in hand.

"They sniped the two of us, as 'twas," he continued later, in answer to a question—"Ay, sniped the two of us, till they got me in the shoulder an' the ribs. That's naught! So I draw'd un down here behind these stones for a bit o' shelter—draw'd un down and waited, and hoped to Gawd as they'd come on! But no fear; they hadn't got the spirit—they hadn't got the spirit—though we was only wan!"

We buried our dead from Dargai fight in the

lonely, desolate valley at Shinwari ; and there, in unmarked graves, they rest in God.

Just beneath the East window of Denton Church, on a square plot of soft turf, kept closely mown and surrounded by a hedge of yew not more than eighteen inches high, are two recumbent stones. The one records that RUPERT GORE departed this life on the 28th day of February, 1899, in the seventy-third year of his age ; and the other, that EDITH, his wife, followed him some five weeks later.

But there is more. Between these two, stands a beautifully fashioned cross of our red Forest stone ; and on the plinth below, run these words :—

To the Glory of God,
and in loving memory of
AINSLIE GORE,
only son of Rupert and Edith Gore,
who gave his life for his Country
on the Indian Frontier, 20th October 1897,
in the 25th year of his age.
This cross is placed here
by the men, women, and children of this parish.

I often go there on the long summer even-

ings, when the sound of bat and ball and
cheery laughter come from the village green,
and the shadows of great elms stretch them-
selves lazily over the cool grass.

Peace let it be! for I loved him and love him for ever;
The dead are not dead but alive.



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